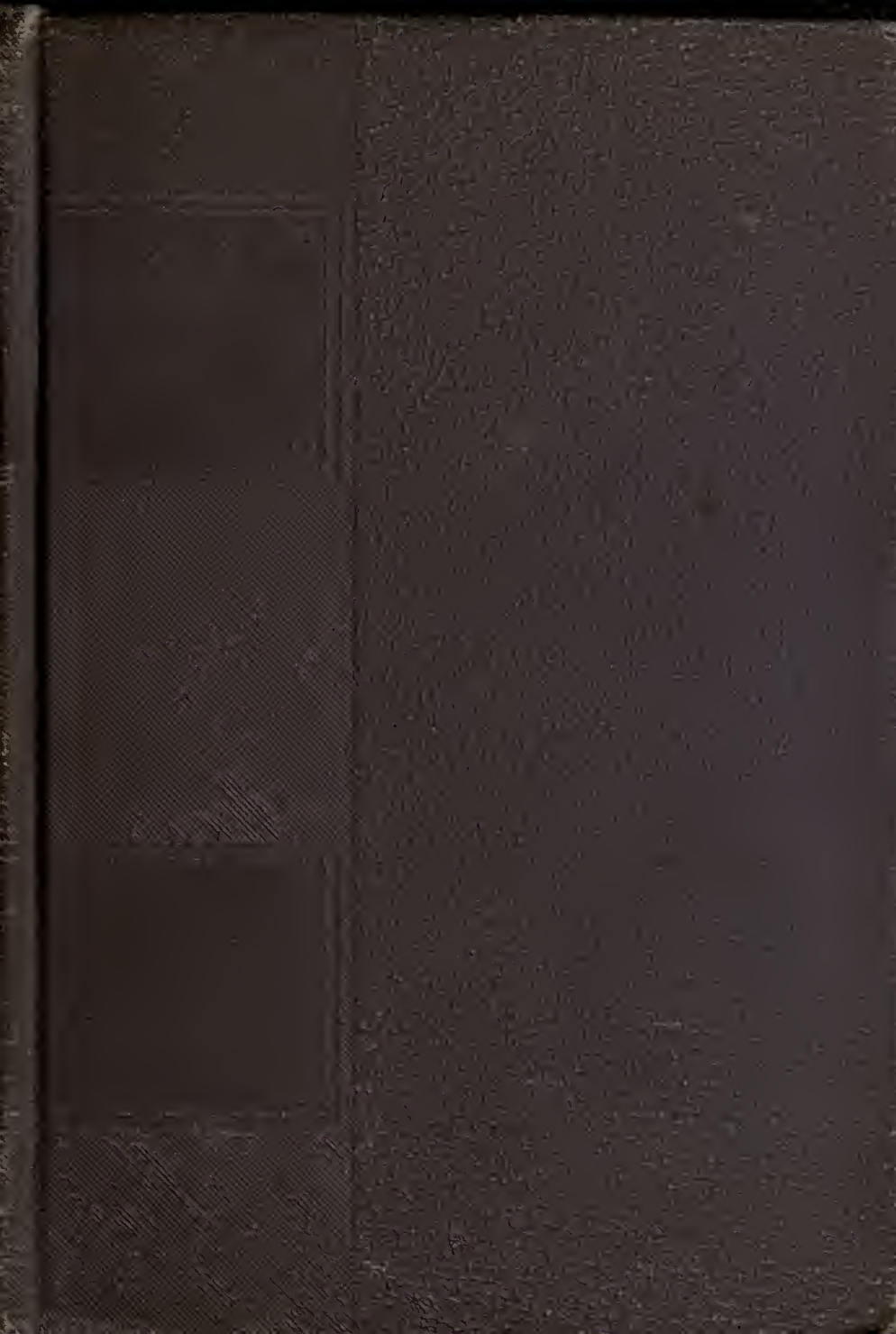




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His glance fell upon her motionless figure stretched upon the carpet.—Page 157.

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DANE WALRAVEN.

(A TALE OF OLD BOSTON.)

BY
LUMAN ALLEN,

AUTHOR OF "LUCIA LASCAR," "PHARAOH'S TREASURE,"
"HELENE SAINTE MAUR," ETC.

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DANE WALRAVEN

CHAPTER I

THE BURNING OF THE ARMADILLO

“ Out on the deep there rose upon the night
The moan of nether winds let loose; a light
’Scaped from some Hadean flood; a voice
Proclaiming havoc.’ —*The Conspirators.*

On the morning of October 29, 1829, the waters of Boston Harbor were of a milk-white hue; on the same night they were of the hue of blood.

With the dawn of that disastrous day one of the most terrific storms that ever swept the coast of New England had come rolling down from the north to hold high carnival in Massachusetts Bay.

From Charles River Bridge, on the north of the city, to the south end as far as India Wharf, the white waves surged and thundered all day, in unison with the diapason of infernal winds, whose shrieks commingled with those of the sea-gull passing out of the track of the tempest.

At the extreme north end of the peninsula, where Lynn and Lyon streets converged to a point, the bounding surf, flung high into the darkling air, resembled a perpetual cascade of foam upon the verge of a

maelstrom. Shipping was rent piecemeal, churned into fragments, buried under the monster waves that hurled themselves upon it with the momentum of falling mountains.

The city itself was shaken as if in the throes of an earthquake; huge chimneys were thrown down, hoary elms were twisted from their trunks and flung upon the deluged streets, while at intervals a falling wall told the awed citizens that havoc was in their midst, and Death seeking for victims. At noon all traffic on the streets and on the wharves was totally suspended. A sober twilight gave unnatural coloring to every object upon which it rested, parted and seamed by interminable lightnings.

When at length the night settled down, the north end of the peninsula was apparently deserted—except by those who had sought refuge inside the houses.

Nothing was now heard save the roar of the surf rolling down from the north over the island rocks, and the incessant moan of the wind, as it pursued the leaping waters.

At an early hour in the morning, a large three-mast vessel was observed far out in the bay, heading laboriously toward the river entrance. Sometimes it seemed to rise into the air, as if thrown upward by some mountain swell; again it would sink into a trough of the sea until it was almost invisible. Gradually it came nearer and nearer, halting often in its laboring course, but pointing always toward the same goal.

At length an old seaman's eye made out a name upon its pennant (which was fast becoming tatters) and read to a group of tars—

"Armadillo, Liverpool."

Late in the afternoon, the ship was driven like a paper toy by the force of the hurricane into the mouth of Charles River. No landing could be effected, and no boat put off from the ship that day. Silent and dark, it lay rocking in the arms of the tempest, its pennant torn into ribbons, its dismantled masts broken off, its decks washed by the billows of the hungry sea.

Night at last crept down upon the ship, hiding it as in the folds of a shroud from the thousands of eyes that all day had watched it from the shelter of houses and wharves.

Far down in the city a bell was tolling faintly nine slow strokes; but the storm still hurtled through the streets and whipped the sea with the same awful, monotonous fury.

The blackness of the night at this hour was appalling.

Suddenly, at the spot where the ship was last seen riding the billows, a bright tongue of flame darted up out of the vortex. Smothered by the invading waves, beaten down by the bombarding winds, it disappeared; but the next instant it again leaped forth, a fiery rift in a wall of blackness.

Then, as the dark hull of the vessel loomed above the curling waves, the faint sound of a bell mingled with the voices of the storm. An ominous boom rolled over the waters—another—and then the river changed its inky hue to a dull red.

What transpired on the ship during that next hour of terror we learn from the note-book of its captain,

Howard Bardell, the only one of the ship's company, except the ship's carpenter, who was saved.

Here are the last pages of the skipper's journal:

All hands were assembled at quarters by the bugle, followed by the pipe—

"Fire brigade, rig pumps!"

As soon as the men were assembled (and a gruesome lot of faces they brought with them) the guns were run in and the ports lowered. Then I commanded the men to stand quiet.

"The fire is in a bad nest, my hearties," I said; "it is in the hold, among the oils, and it will be hard to get at. But you are brave fellows, and British seamen; and if the Armadillo can be saved, you will save her."

Then the poor fellows, who were doomed as surely as was our good ship, sent up a shout that drowned the howl of the wind and the uproar of the waters—

"We'll do it, captain! We'll stand by the old ship, sir!"

Ah, my heart swelled as though it would crack my ribs, as I looked at the lads. There were tears under my eyelids, too, which the lads didn't see.

Well, the port watch had been piped to the pumps and the starboard watch had fallen in on the upper deck. In a jiffy, the port watch were at work, and I heard many a groan from the men, as they realized how serious it was; but there was no confusion.

The hatchways were covered; and some of the forecastle men were sent to lower canvas screens, so as to stop all draught-holes below.

In another minute, a part of the starboard watch had the hammocks out, and were sousing the bedding. At this some of the simple lads grumbled a bit; not knowing (as I did, God help them!) that they would sleep that night in a wetter bed—below the keel.

The beds were passed down to the fire, although I knew it was of precious little use. Still, nothing is impossible, at sea; and besides, it is not for the skipper to rob his crew of hope, or lose it himself.

So, my voice was cheery, when I gave the next orders, if it *was* a bit hoarse—

“Shorten sail!”

“Out, boats!”

What was running in my head at that moment, to move me to give the first of these two orders, I am not able to tell. It was so ludicrous, so absurd, that the lads laughed, and their spirits rose, at the skipper’s sorry joke. For, you see, the masts were stubs, and there was not in sight a loose piece of sail big enough to make a shroud for the powder-boy.

The fire was now all above and below, and the timbers were hot and cracked anon, and the wind, like the breath of ten thousand devils, fanned and coaxed the flames in every part of the ship. So, then, I took the keys of the magazine flooding-cocks, and sent for the gunner. I knew, now, that Davy Jones or Moloch was waiting for us, and I swore to myself that at least we would go down with sound and whole bodies, and not in pieces.

In the meantime, I had directed senior marine officer Falmouth to post sentries on the spirit-rooms, store-

rooms, and quarter-boats. Then I gave the order which the commander of a ship is always willing to leave to the last—

"Master-at-Arms, release prisoners!"

Ah, God forgive me, if I sometimes wish I had given that order too late!

CHAPTER II

THE FATE OF WALTER WALRAVEN

Now we had but two prisoners in the "Armadillo" when we entered port. And, it being the case that this part of my log has been left unwritten for a very long time, and that since the burning of the ship many strange and some sorrowful things have happened, growing out of that proper and merciful but all the same fatal order to release prisoners, it behooves me to leave a record of the events that occurred on board concerning those two prisoners, and some others.

When we sailed from Liverpool, the ship's carpenter was laid up in port, and had to be left behind. By chance or contrivance, I know not which, two fellows who had been running a barge on Solway Firth, brought letters to me just then from the landlord of the Royal Inn at Carlisle, the old cathedral town in Cumberland, England, giving the information that one was a good carpenter, and the other a good sailor, with nothing known against either of them. The carpenter was named Joel Thorp, and he had with him his son, a fine-looking lad of fourteen, and his daughter, a good-looking lass of sixteen. He himself was an evil-faced fellow, very sullen-mannered and skulking, but to this I paid little attention then. He wanted

to emigrate to America, and was willing to work his passage and that of his two children.

The other fellow was as ill-favored as Thorp, and I shall, for reasons that will hereafter appear, give a very particular description of him. He was about five feet eight inches in height, with broad and square shoulders, flat chest and back, heavy jaws, and straight, long chin, a straight and always closed mouth, on which was a perpetual smile like that of a demon's, deep-set black eyes under lids that were always lowered, as though he feared his evil soul might be seen if he unveiled, black, straight hair, cut close to a long head. His body was bent forward from the waist in walking, and his step was like that of a panther, quick and gliding. All these details escaped me at the time, but later they were but too clearly impressed upon my sight and memory. The name of this man was James Crouch; and he, too, wanted to emigrate.

Well, I took them both; and the day they came aboard we sailed out of the Mersey, bound for a port that only two of the ship's company ever reached.

We had on board a Mr. Walter Walraven and his little son, Dane, who were coming to Boston to remain, though hailing from Hampshire, in the extreme south of England, where, hard by the most venerable and ancient town of Winchester, was situated Walraven House, the manorial estate of the family for some generations, but which Mr. W. had sold, having lost his beautiful and worthy lady the year before under extraordinary and painful circumstances, and finding too many mournful associations in the vicinity of his

English home. I had known him for several years back, having met him and his wife at Greystoke Park, the country seat of my relative, near Penrith, hard by Carlisle, in the south of England, they having been frequent visitors to old Cumberland. It was there, indeed, that his wife met, or was supposed to have met, her death.

Mr. Walraven was a tall, finely-featured gentleman, of about forty, of a very rare and splendid blonde type, and the lad (who was three years and three days old on the day we entered Boston Harbor) was a wee image of him. He had brought with him a strong and curiously made mahogany box, with a brass handle to carry it by, and bound around the corners with brass, and with double locks. It had been stowed in his state-room, and was quite heavy; so I was not surprised when the second day out he came to me and said:

"Captain, I wish, as a precaution, to inform you that the box I brought aboard contains all my fortune, twenty thousand pounds sterling, in English gold. My boy (pointing to the yellow-haired little chap with a look of affectionate pride) is my only heir; and as I have known you well, and possess your friendship, I have made you my executor, and Dane's guardian if the need for one should come."

Ah, how soon the need came! How we both joked over the matter, and drank a foaming glass or two in the cabin, where he told me all that and more, while the blue eyes of the lad danced with delight at the notion of having the captain of a big ship for his

second papa! Fine plans we laid then, and some of them have come to pass—but the way to them was over the grave of Dane's "first" father.

Well, we had just crossed the line of the Dublin and Bristol packets when that mahogany box began to give trouble. Was there ever, I wonder, a case where a man kept his own without a fight for it? I do not believe so. Anyhow, Mr. Walraven's gold brought on a fight, and a good many bad consequences have followed. God knows what further trouble is to come of it—but I am spinning much too long a yarn, maybe, so I'll begin to furl.

The Thorp boy had acquired a habit of mousing around the rooms of the officers, and particularly that of Mr. Walraven. I was not exactly suspicious that he was after any meanness, but didn't like it. Several times I sent him below, upon finding him where he had no business, and one day as he was prowling in the steward's room aft, I took him by the collar of his jacket, and cuffed him soundly.

Now, Mr. Walraven had told no one but myself of the secret treasury he had in his state-room, but the boy Silas was at the time hanging about the cabin, and it is certain, from what happened on the night before we rounded the headland in Massachusetts Bay, that Silas had been eavesdropping, and had heard the communication made to me. Anyhow, that night, just before dark, it appears, he crept into Mr. Walraven's room, and carried off the box and hid it below, under some tarpaulin junk. Then he sought his father, who was waiting near a stanchion, and whis-

pered what he had done, and pointed to the spot where he had secreted the box.

Now, it so happened that little Dane, a pet with all the crew as well as with all the officers of the ship, had been taken below by one of the sailors, to gratify his childish curiosity, and was playing about some bales of wool when Silas came down with the box. Unobserved by the young thief, Dane saw it placed under the junk; and as soon as he was taken above, his childish instinct led him to his father with the important fact that—

"The man with the crooked fingers, and his boy, had taken the pretty box down there, and hid it away."

Of course Mr. Walraven hurried to his room, and sure enough the box was gone. I was hastily called, and summoned the master-at-arms and a sailor, and we all descended together, taking Dane with us. The boy Silas was in the vicinity of the loot, probably to watch it; the intention and the hope being, of course, to get off from the ship in a boat with it before the next morning, and make for some other point on the coast.

CHAPTER III

JOEL THORP AND THE SKIPPER DISAGREE

"There is the bad boy!"

That was little Dane's exclamation, the moment he got sight of Silas, and the latter, betraying his guilt on the spot, skipped away, no doubt to warn his father that the job had been discovered.

Then Dane ran to the old tarpaulin, and attempted to drag it off the box. We were moving toward it, also, when we heard a sudden rush of feet coming from the hatches aft, and the next minute we were attacked by Thorp and his son, and the man Crouch, each of them having in his hands a marline-spike which was raised over us with the very evident intention of braining us. Fortunately, each of my party had a pistol, and myself and the master-at-arms carried each a cutlass; otherwise, the wretches would have made brief work of it, for there was no one in sight to help us.

We laid to, without any parley, you can be sure; and soon had the desperate thieves down.

The lad was only scratched a little; the fellow Crouch had two of the fingers of his left hand cut off in trying to grasp my cutlass; and Thorp had lost his left eye by a blow which I was obliged to deal him with the handle of my weapon. He fell down with a

screech that was devilish. Indeed, his rage was terrible, and the sight of his naturally ugly and now disfigured and bloody face was hideous.

Thorp was not vanquished yet, however; for no sooner was he manacled and lifted to his feet, than he aimed a murderous blow at my head, striking me severely with the irons on his hands. For this, I ordered him to be taken on deck and twenty lashes given him; which was done with more than good-will, and I really had some difficulty in preventing the men from throwing the fellow overboard. His bare back, bleeding, and his face in a bloody state also, he looked, as it *was*, pretty badly done up.

The Thorp boy and girl, during this scene, acted like young demons, howling with rage and terror, and attacking the sailors who had their father in tow, until it became necessary to give the boy a light drubbing, and to tie both of the two and lock them up. At daylight they were let out.

After Joel Thorp's wounds were dressed, I directed him to be taken to a cell, and the same direction had disposed of Crouch. As Thorp was being dragged away, he turned his head toward me, with a tigerish glare in his one steel-blue eye, and—

"I'll remember ye—curse ye!" he yelled; "an' I'll pay ye for this an' for all—for all, d'ye understand?" (But I didn't understand, though I think I do understand *now*—somewhat) "An' I'll remember the kid, curse him! Oh, ye've only whetted my teeth by this, curse ye, *curse ye!*"

- And that was the situation when we came into the harbor.

That night the fire came; and I believe it was the boy Silas that set the Armadillo in a blaze. I did not give a thought to the cause of the fire then, but I gave given it many a thought since, and my black suspicions run to the boy, in spite of me.

Well, I gave the order to release prisoners; and the men were brought up, the irons taken off, and they were allowed to go about as freely as the rest, that they might have a chance for their lives, when the moment to fight for them should come.

That moment was coming fast.

We could not land, on account of the storm. And while we looked into that seething whirlpool of blood-red waters whose thousand black mouths were opening all around us, and while the land loomed close at hand as though to torture us by the sight of it, the stanch ship of which I was part owner and in which I had sailed many a prosperous voyage, was burned to the water-line. Every soul of the crew went down except the carpenter and the boom-tricer Crouch; all the officers except myself were lost. I got the passengers in a boat, and put off at the last moment before the flames swept the decks; and Mr. Walraven succeeded in bringing away his precious box. The carpenter and Crouch managed to get away, and were cast ashore—as all in my boat also were.

“My boat was thrown on the shore at the bend just north of Causeway Street; and there we all lay, in a battered and bruised heap, insensible and half-frozen, for the balance of that terrible night.

The next morning we were picked up, and were

taken to the Globe Hotel, in Hanover Street, hard by the pier of the Winnesimitt Ferry. I was soon in shape, and little Dane came around in good order, and the mahogany box was taut and safe. But Mr. Walraven had been struck by or been hurled head first against a rock and he was a long time opening his eyes. When he did, he set them on me and I saw he was ready to ship his anchor.

"Take care of Dane," he whispered, very feebly, "and get *the will* out of the box. That was—a wise—precaution—Bardell—God bless you—"

Then he lay in my arms—dead.

The next day we put the handsome and proud form of my friend in its tomb; and then I took the beautiful boy he had given me by the hand, and we went away, weeping together.

We took quarters at the tavern of Mr. Adams, 369 Washington Street (sign of the Lamb), where we were made very comfortable, and had many visits, especially from ladies. These impulsive but well-intentioned women would have carried the boy off from me piecemeal, I have not a doubt, if they could have done so without a fatality. They were constantly taking him away in their carriages, to visit their own youngsters at their elegant and pleasant homes; and several offered to adopt him. Egad! the bonny laddie could have taken his pick among half a dozen aristocratic families who were willing to call him *son*. But I felt that I was not selfish when I refused to part with him; I was carrying out his father's wishes; I was getting a home ready for him; and his money had

been put out at six per cent by Mr. Winthrop, the president of the Union Bank, a sound and safe institution of seventeen years' standing. So, when the great dames came to me for final decisions, I said to them—

"I am as good as a father to the lad; and he doesn't need to be adopted into a family in order to secure a home—nor a fortune, either. And it being the case that I am his guardian and the custodian of his money, and that he and I are getting to be fast mates, and it also being the case that I have no family, and no relations, and—no *ship*, why, we'll stay together."

And we did. But the excellent people who had taken such an interest in Dane, first because he was shipwrecked or stranded, and second because of his great beauty and wonderful sweet temper and manners, continued to invite him to their homes; and he made in this way so many acquaintances in a little while, that it was as though he had been born in the midst of them; all of which was very gratifying, and promised well for his happiness and well-doing when he should be older.

But black clouds were gathering over both of us; we were going to feel the whip of misfortune, the sting of sorrow, Dane and I.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN BARDELL'S STRANGE VISITOR

Two years had passed since the date of the great storm and the burning of the "Armadillo."

Only two years; yet this brief interval of time was plethoric with events of the gravest importance to those in whose remembrance these chronicles are written.

The captain had established himself in the ship-chandlery business, near the long wharf; and as he conducted his affairs with prudence, the strictest integrity, and wise liberality, he had secured not only the custom of a large and influential class, but the social recognition and esteem of the best citizens in the community. His amiable and excellent qualities had drawn about him a large coterie of friends, and his comfortable and well ordered house in Tremont Street south, was a favorite resort, especially of the church to which he had attached himself. The pastor of this, the First Church, in Chauncey Place, Mr. Frothingham, was one of the captain's most valued friends, and was a frequent visitor also; and the friendship of this excellent minister was destined very soon to prove of the utmost benefit to the captain, as we shall presently see.

Dane was now past his fifth year; and was rapidly

developing, not only in his sturdy little body, but in those traits which render childhood so charming, and its promise so pleasing. The love of the guardian and ward for each other was something beautiful, both in its perfect sincerity and in its delicate manifestation. It promised happiness to both; and yet out of it was to come—woe!

It was now nearing the end of the year and an early fall had long since stripped the elms of their red and gold raiment and the skies were leaden with icy vapors.

On such a morning as this the captain stood in his library, placidly gazing out at the snowy particles that flaked the windows, when he saw, approaching the house and ascending the steps, the figure of a man whom he had last seen by the ruddy but terrible light of his burning ship, tossing in a quarter-boat in a churning sea. The face of this man was not a pleasant sight to the skipper, and his own clouded, and his brows gathered in a frown as he heard the heavy knocker sounding against the hall door. But he waited where he was, while Mrs. Peddie, his Scotch housekeeper, went briskly to answer the somewhat peremptory summons.

The moment she opened the outer door, the man stepped into the hall.

"Can I see the captain?" he asked, in a tone of importance, and with a consequential air, as though he considered his business of grave import.

Mrs. Peddie eyed him suspiciously.

"What is it you want, sir?" demanded she rather sharply.

The visitor gave a preliminary sniff, then emitted a sound as if he was swallowing something and replied in a snarling tone:

"My business is with the gentleman; will you be good enough to tell him I wish to see him?"

The condescending manner of the man, his impudent tone of command, and the covert glitter of a pair of black eyes which he kept carefully veiled by their long red lids, and a curious turning of the pupils downward roused, the independent and irascible Scotch blood in Mrs. Peddie. She was born in the Highlands, had hid in Wallace's Cave when a wee bairn, and feared "nae black bodie." Besides she had felt an instinctive dislike for the man the instant he set foot in the hall. She therefore retorted, more sharply than before:

"Ye neednae be sae brash wi' yure orders, my man! And Mr. Bardell is just down the minute for his breakfast, and I shallnae disturb him, unless it—unless the business is important."

"Oh, I will wait until he is through," returned the visitor, with a nasal drawl, and the habitual smile broadening across his square chin.

The housekeeper was baffled again; but she was not ready to yield.

"Is yure business—important?" she demanded.

'Um—my business is always important, madam. See here, now," he said, with a sudden snarl, "you can't treat me this way or bluff me. I'm a gentleman, and I'm going to see your master."

The worthy Mrs. Peddie stared at him, and shud-

dered. Her premonitions were, like those of many others of her race, rarely at fault, nor were they in this instance. If only the honest and unsuspecting captain had had some of her prescience!

"What is yure name-- if ye have one?" demanded she.

"My name is James Crouch," replied he stiffly.

"And does Mr. Bardell know ye?"

"He *has* known me and I think he will recollect me," with a sniff and a swallow. "Now, my dear madam, if you will oblige me by telling him that I want to see him on business, you will save time and trouble; and my time is worth money."

The housekeeper glanced at the long-bodied figure, with its long arms partly immersed in the deep pockets of the shabby overcoat, and smothered a contemptuous exclamation of dissent; but she succumbed.

"Sit down here," pushing a chair toward him, "and wait until I come back."

Mr. Crouch slowly seated himself, while his covert glance malignantly pursued the retreating figure.

"Hm—you're snippish, madam," muttered he, with his heavy jaws set, "but if I'm not mistaken, we'll know each other better, after awhile!"

Then he remained silent, with his large ears a-cock for the returning footsteps, which now came very slowly toward him.

A singular character, was this man, and a *real* one, as some others whose names are disguised in these chapters are. A phenomenally wicked man, revengeful to an insane degree, implacable and cruel, as cunning

a scoundrel as ever cursed the earth. A black-hearted reptile, who hated the more for being nourished, fed, or aided; whose very origin—low and vicious—gave him opportunities to intrude upon those respectable people whom it was with him a fiendish pleasure to thereafter blackmail or slander.

When Mrs. Peddie reluctantly returned to conduct him to her master, his face wore a cringing mask, his thick lips, always compressed, a smirk. The captain stood in the center of the room, his pleasant face still clouded. He looked cold and unimpressible to the stealthy eyes of his visitor; and the latter was for a moment secretly disconcerted. But he had deliberately arranged his programme; and the resentment he now felt under the steady, questioning eyes of the man who had put him in irons and whom he had another and far more deadly reason to hate, as he believed, stimulated his sinister purpose, and emboldened him to proceed.

CHAPTER V

A REPTILE CHARACTER

"You remember me, sir?" Crouch began, as he writhed or rather darted into the library, and stood holding his bell-crowned hat in his folded hands.

"By your name, yes," was the cool answer. "I have not a strong memory for faces."

It had been fortunate for the captain, indeed, if his memory had been better.

"What is the object of your visit?" inquired the latter, omitting to invite Crouch to seat himself.

"Hm—I called to see you about a position that is open to me, if I can get some gentleman's influence in my favor; and as you are a member of the City Council, and the only gentleman I am acquainted with this side of the water, I have come to ask you to help me get the place."

"What is the situation you seek?" inquired his listener, indifferently.

"Assistant Superintendent of Burial Grounds," replied Crouch, promptly.

"Ah! I don't know much about that office. What are the superintendent's duties?"

Evidently, the applicant for the lugubrious post had studied the duties well, for he answered glibly—

"To keep a record book in his office, in which to

register all deaths that are reported to him, the age, name, business, place of burial, place of death and the cause of same. To direct the sextons; to issue permits to bury, open or close graves or tombs, or remove bodies."

This catechetical recital elicited no response from the captain, who, however, opened his blue eyes a trifle wider, while he surveyed the applicant in silence.

The latter waited a few moments, and then remarked, with an assumption of indifference that would have imposed on no one but the skipper, who had always sailed in open waters, and had never kept "a weather eye for snags—"

"You came from Carlisle, down in Cumberland, I believe?"

"Yes."

"I used to be there—often," continued the visitor, demurely.

"Indeed?" The skipper evinced some curiosity at this bit of information.

"Yes, sir, I was for some time gardener at Greystoke Park, near to Penrith, the seat of a branch of the Howards."

"Ah?" The captain was becoming interested.

"Yes," with modest complacence, "but I wanted to see a bit of the outside; so I went off to the Guernsey coast, and tried fishing there."

The captain smiled slightly, and shook his head.

"You are sure it was *fishing*, are you?" he asked, ironically. He well knew that the fishermen of Guernsey in general were smugglers, at that date.

"Oh, yes. But I didn't make out; and it was hard on me there. I came back to England as far as I could and then made up my mind to come to America, where I could earn an honest living."

"You made a bad beginning, on board my ship," observed the skipper, his face becoming suddenly stern.

But Crouch was prepared for this reproach.

"I think you are wrong," said he with extreme gravity, and in a congested tone, "but I suppose you are minded of the Thorp business."

"I was thinking of the Thorp business," returned the captain, severely, "and I was thinking of the part you played openly in it, and the part I believe you played secretly in it."

The dark-skinned face turned gray, and the corrugations in the low forehead deepened, but beyond this there was no sign from Crouch, of either anger or guilty consciousness. In a deprecating tone he said:

"I knew nothing about the robbery of the box until after it was found; and Thorp told me the thieving was charged on him, and he was innocent. So, seeing as we came aboard together, and came on from the same part of the country, I thought I was duty-bound to stand by him; and that's how it happened that I got into the row. I am very sorry it happened, captain."

The heart of the skipper softened, as he heard this quite natural version of the affair. Natural, perhaps, had Crouch been a stupid and ignorant person; but he was both intelligent and fairly educated; and his explanation was unpalatable as it was false.

The captain stood silently regarding the fellow with a steady scrutiny for awhile. He was a generous and kindly man as well as a brave one. The man seemed repentant; that was something in his favor. And perhaps he was in distress.

"Have you succeeded in anything since you came over?" he inquired

"Poorly, sir. Times have been hard with me, and most of the seamen and the people that I have run against know that I was a prisoner on the ship you commanded, and it has kept me down."

This was an appeal, insinuatingly made, to his sense of "justice," quite as much as to his generosity, and it had an apparent effect. Moreover, what some people would have called "the infernal luck of the fellow," had brought him to the captain's door at a most propitious moment for the success of his schemes. The captain was going forth that morning on an errand the success of which he had spent the night in praying for. He was about to make a proposition of marriage to one whom he passionately loved, and his heart at this moment was unusually tender.

He stood lost in reflection. Perhaps a generous act just now would insure the fruition of his trembling hopes; and it might be that Fortune was testing him before conferring its supremest favor upon him.

Crouch neither moved nor spoke while these thoughts were passing. He had kept his evil eyes shaded, as usual, by his drooping lids, as if fearful that his black soul might be read, and his treacherous heart reveal its cesspool through them.

"Well," said Captain Bardell, finally, "bring me some recommendations from respectable persons for whom you have worked during the past six or eight months, and if I am satisfied with them I will get the place for you."

"I will do that at once," returned Crouch, briskly, as he crept toward the door; "and I'll try to pay you."

His patron had already started to leave the library while Crouch was delivering this speech; and something indefinably unpleasant in the tone in which the last words were uttered caused him to turn and look after the skulking figure as it passed with its springing step into the hall.

Mrs. Peddie was at hand to open the street door; and as the man glided by her, with a peculiar smirk on his sinister face, she shrank away from him; her eyes wore a troubled expression, as she closed the door slowly.

"Ugh!" murmured she, "I do feel as though a reptile had crawled into the house!"

And again her woman's intuition had not failed: a reptile *had* crawled into the house.

CHAPTER VI

CAPTAIN BARDELL'S COURTSHIP

Out on the old Salem turnpike, nine miles distant from Boston, lies the ancient town of Lynn, famous, even at the date of our story, for its extensive shoe manufactories.

Hundreds of young girls were at that time employed in these establishments, many of whom attended a night-school which a few philanthropic ladies of the town had organized. A young lady of Lynn who taught in the principal school there, was induced to preside over this night-school, devoting to its duties two hours of each alternate evening in the week. This teacher, Miss Clara Phillips, was an orphan of twenty, beautiful, of excellent birth, and with many amiable qualities of both mind and person. She made her home with an estimable elderly widow lady, a Mrs. Farnsworth, where she sometimes received brief visits from several of her brightest scholars, among the latter a handsome and intelligent girl of eighteen, known as Ellen Peters.

Ellen had been a factory girl for upwards of a year when she entered the night-school, and had made such rapid progress in her studies, and had exhibited so pleasing and adaptable a disposition, as to gain especial favor with her teacher. There was something

peculiar about the girl, a restlessness of manner, and a reticence of habit, which for a long time puzzled Clara, who regarded her as strangely eccentric but liked her none the less. She appeared to have no relatives, and to know no one except her co-workers in the factory, and with these she was reserved to austerity.

An accident at a bathing pier extending out from the famous Lynn Beach, and from which Miss Phillips had fallen, sustaining a severe concussion, had brought these two together. Ellen, who had been sauntering along the shore at dusk one evening, had witnessed the mishap and had helped the young lady to her home, receiving a kind invitation, before she left for her own lodgings, to come to the night-school. Nothing more was seen of her by Miss Phillips, however, until more than a month had elapsed, when an incident again brought about a meeting between these two whose fates were to be fearfully intermingled.

The Lynn Beach is a magnificent stretch of more than a mile and a half between Lynn and Nahant, and was quite as popular a resort with the good people of Boston half a century ago as it is at the present day.

One of the most frequent visitors from the city was Captain Howard Bardell, whose thoroughbred bays and stylish four-wheeler were seen there twice or thrice a week. Dane always accompanied his guardian; and the latter found even more delight in observing the smiles bestowed on the boy by the beach-seekers, than in the grand view of the sea he had always loved.

During one of his excursions thither on an exquisitely golden afternoon in October, that queen of the months around Boston, the captain was suddenly startled out of a reverie as he drove along the beach with Dane at his side, by an exclamation from his ward—

"Look—look, 'Guardy, what a pretty lady!"

The captain turned his face away from the sea, with a smile at the boy's vivacity, and his eyes rested full upon the face of the young teacher. She had been sauntering dreamily along the shore, and was coming toward the slowly moving vehicle, when her glance fell upon the sunlit head of the boy. Involuntarily she stopped for an instant, and as Dane chanced to be gazing at her, her fair face lit up with a smile that made it radiant.

The captain's glance caught the smile and their eyes met. But while his followed her form with an eagerness which brought the crimson into her cheeks her own fell instantly; and with some confusion in her manner she hurried past him and turned away from the beach.

The captain breathed something like a sigh as he touched his horses up and then suddenly brought them to a stand at the edge of the pier on the left where he saw a handsome girl, motionless and pale, staring alternately at himself and Dane. Accustomed to the scrutiny which Dane invariably attracted, he paid no attention to the appearance of the girl, except to observe that she wore no bonnet or wrap and from this circumstance he judged her to be a resident of the town,

Touching his hat politely he asked her if such was the case.

With an odd appearance of embarrassment, and with her keen black eyes fixed upon Dane, she answered yes.

Then the captain became embarrassed in his turn. He wished to know the name of the young lady who had just passed him, where she lived, and something more, and he had obeyed part of the impulse to ask this stranger to tell him. But now he realized the possible impropriety of such inquiries, and he hesitated.

But the girl had observed everything; she instantly guessed, from his confused manner, that it was not herself in whom he felt such sudden interest, but the one who had vanished among the chestnut trees a moment before.

A look that might have been relief passed over her brown face; and then, with a faint smile of sarcasm, she surprised him with a question:

"You want to know who that lady is, sir, I suppose?"

"Oh, the lady that just passed?" stammered he. "Do—do you think, now—that she was really frightened at the horses?"

The girl laughed; and to the captain, the laugh seemed to mock him. It had a ring of bitterness in it, too, although there could be no reason for it.

"Did she look like she was frightened?" queried she, dryly.

"I—I don't know," he confessed, hesitatingly, and

beginning to look uncomfortable. Half a dozen persons had loitered near, and these were drawing inferences that seemed to greatly amuse them, especially when they observed the captain's color. He was, in truth, managing very badly.

He caught up his lines, and was on the point of moving on, when the girl suddenly came close to the side of the vehicle, and said in an undertone:

"The lady is Miss Clara Phillips; she teaches school—at the seminary. Do you want to see her?"

The captain was not prepared for so bold a suggestion, and he reddened more fiercely than ever. But Dane instantly clapped his hands with delight.

"Yes, yes, say yes, Guardy!"

And turning his sunny face towards the girl, he said coaxingly:

"You'll take us to see her, won't you? I just know you know her—"

"Hush, hush, my lad," expostulated his guardian, looking seriously perplexed. But suddenly a fine idea occurred to him.

"You know the lady?" inquired he, turning to the girl.

"Yes, sir; I have been to her home."

"That is well. Now you see how eager my little ward is to make her acquaintance; and it always pains me to deny him anything—anything reasonable, you understand; especially as he is an orphan, and I am the only one in the world to look after his pleasures. Now, perhaps you would go to the lady and tell her all this—that is, tell her about the lad, and ask her if I may bring him to see her—will you?"

The captain was doing finely, now.

The girl regarded him steadily, with a curious expression, and answered slowly:

"Yes, I will do what you wish. If you will drive at a walk, turning around the clump of elm trees yonder, toward the right, you will see a two-story house, painted brown, standing back in a yard. That's where she lives. I'll cut through a short way, and see her and be outside by the time you get to the gate."

"Ah, thank you," said the captain, as she started briskly away, "and—one moment, please. What is your name?"

The girl eyed him with the same peculiar smile as before, reflected a second or two and replied gravely:

"Ellen Peters."

Then she walked rapidly up toward Beach Street, the captain's horses slowly following.

It was dark night when he and Dane drove back over the turnpike, leaving behind them two persons whose influence upon the lives of both was destined to soon weave about them a shroud as black as the garments of Eros.

CHAPTER VII

SEQUEL OF A DRIVE ON THE LYNN BEACH

The end of November was approaching, the trees were leafless, and the winds that began to sweep along the Lynn Beach were bleak, and the sea itself looked gray and dismal.

Notwithstanding all this, the energetic mariner found greater attractions on the strand than ever before; and after an invariably rapid drive to the town, he as invariably found it necessary to rest for a season at the widow's three gabled house, and to secure a companion for his stroll or drive on the shore. The widow had become quite infatuated with Dane; and she usually contrived to entice him into staying with her during the perambulations of Clara and the captain; and sometimes Ellen Peters came while the lad was there, and her ingenious efforts to divert him led after awhile to a sort of comradeship between him and her which she appeared to be singularly desirous of strengthening. Ellen had entered the night-school immediately after the first meeting between the young teacher and Captain Bardell; and she had begun to visit the former once or twice a week, making herself not only very agreeable but useful as well, both to Clara and Mrs. Farnsworth.

On New Year's day following his first meeting with

Miss Phillips, the captain called upon Mr. Frothingham, the pastor of the First Church, and informed him of the growing interest he felt in that young lady, whom he described to the reverend gentleman as a being of "exquisite perfections."

Miss Phillips had many friends in Lynn, and not a few admirers; but this latest acquisition to her suite was not the least pretentious. Indeed, it may be said that he was proving formidable. His manly figure and bearing, his frank and honorable nature, the possession of a sound mentality and finished education, rendered him more than a match for his younger rivals.

Nor can it be said that Mr. Bardell, albeit a modest gentleman, and of a reserved disposition, either underrated his powers or neglected his opportunities. He wanted a wife; he was certainly old enough to choose one intelligently; and Clara Phillips was his "unanimous choice."

Mr. Bardell's mind had been somewhat disturbed by sundry doubts, before his interview with his minister. He had a great deal of faith in the latter's judgment, and had sought him for advice.

"Do you think, sir," he gravely asked, "that the disparity in our ages will prove a very decided disadvantage on my side?"

The captain appeared to be thinking of a sea-fight. But love has turned stronger heads than his.

"How old are you?" demanded the minister.

"Forty," replied the other, moving uneasily.

"Hum. And she?"

"Twenty," returned the captain, moving still more uneasily.

"Just escaped it!" was the enigmatical comment of his sententious counselor.

"I don't quite understand you, sir?" observed the suitor and client, rising abruptly, and staring anxiously at the old gentleman.

The latter smiled cheerfully over his spectacles, and getting out of his padded chair, he squared his portly figure in front of the lugubrious candidate, placed his hands behind him under his coat-tails, and said beamingly:

"You have just escaped being old enough to be her father."

"How—what?"

Mr. Bardell backed into his chair, overcome by an announcement in which only Mr. Frothingham seemed to see something humorous.

"Come, come," exclaimed the latter, "you do not appear to appreciate that fact."

Then he advanced to the captain's chair, and laying one forefinger into the palm of his other hand:

"You're nineteen years older than your wife; that is, you're a grown up man. You're *not* 'old enough to be her father,' and nobody can throw *that* up to you. Therefore, you have nothing to fear—if she's a sensible young woman. Go to her with confidence; and let me know to-morrow night when the bans are to be read. Be off now, you silly boy, and don't drive your horses too fast on your way back from Lynn."

Mr. Bardell walked briskly home, murmuring to himself, while a smile of satisfaction rippled over his bronzed face:

"Excellent man! Why, he's twenty years older than I am—and he's as bright as a new guinea."

Accordingly, on the morning following, when Jem Crouch glided out of the Bardell residence, the captain's natty team came prancing up to the entrance, champing their bits with as much impatience as though they knew they were going in search of a mistress. They certainly knew the direction they were expected to take; and with flying hoofs, and without feeling the lines over their sleek flanks, they sped away in the light of the glorious morning sun toward the pale star that shone under the brown gables of the old house in Lynn.

It was but a little past ten o'clock when the Widow Farnsworth heard a loud peal from the brass knocker of her front door. Promptly answering the summons, she stood in the doorway, in her proverbial black bombazine and black silk apron, surveying the visitor over her gold-rimmed spectacles with unconcealed surprise.

"La, it's Mr. Bardell!" ejaculated the quaint old dame, ushering him with friendly fussiness into the prim little parlor. Seating herself opposite his chair for a moment, she folded her hands in her lap, and again smilingly surveyed him.

"La, me, I was actually set back, when I saw you first. 'Thinks I, *have* I lost a day? If I have, thinks I, it's a warning. But then it ain't strange; I'm getting along, and memory can't last forever. Why, let me see, I'm old enough to be your mother!"

The captain started visibly at these familiar words,

and his face flushed. Then he glanced at the plump figure of the widow, and smiled complacently.

"Old age hasn't reached *you* yet, Mrs. Farnsworth," said he, gallantly.

The widow shook her head with a non-committal movement.

"I must say I felt a little set back when I saw you. You never come on Saturday, it's always Sunday. It's true I take the Lynn 'Record;' but the editor himself missed the day, the right date, I mean, once; and I've never had any confidence in the paper since."

Then a few moments of silence ensued, the widow quizzically eyeing him the while.

"I s'pose you want to see Clara?" she said, finally.

"Hm—if it is convenient," replied he, feeling not altogether comfortable.

"Of course it's convenient," responded she cheerfully. "Well, she just went out a little bit since, but she can't be far. There, she's coming now."

There was a light step in the hall, and then—Ellen Peters looked into the room.

She gave the captain a sedate courtesy, and was about to withdraw, when the widow called her.

"Ellen," said she, "can you find Miss Clara and bring her home? Mr. Bardell wants to see her. It's important."

The girl looked fixedly into his face for an instant, with searching eyes; then she answered quietly, as she turned away,

"I can find her."

Five minutes had scarcely elapsed, when Clara en-

tered the room. She stopped abruptly, her eyes betraying even greater surprise than Mrs. Farnsworth had exhibited.

The latter had risen, and murmuring an excuse left the parlor.

"You did not know it was I who sent for you?" inquired her visitor, as he took her hand, and led her to a seat.

"No," replied she with an air of perplexity.

"Ellen did not tell you, then?"

"No, she said there was a—a *foreign* gentleman in the parlor, who wished to see me immediately, about a subject that isn't taught in schools," answered Clara, innocently.

The captain thought this rather queer; but he laughed heartily; and Clara sank back in her chair with an unaccountable feeling that there was something strange in Ellen's manner, and that she herself had been saying something ridiculous.

Mr. Bardell had now reached the supreme moment; and what then transpired is worthy of a chapter by itself.

CHAPTER VII

THE BETROTHAL

The captain had seated himself beside the chair in which Clara sat shrinkingly waiting the explanation of his visit. He had taken the soft white hand again, and was holding it firmly, while she, beginning to recover her self-possession, bethought her that his errand concerned Dane, to whom she was deeply attached. Dane was frequently the principal subject of conversation between them, and the captain had often sought her advice in matters affecting his ward's comfort and pursuits. She had, in fact, come to feel a sort of second guardianship over Dane, herself. Perhaps the captain was about to ask her to teach the boy, thought she, and her heart glowed with pleasure at the mere suggestion of such a happy possibility.

Absorbed by this fancy, she forgot that the captain was still holding her hand, that he was bending his blue eyes upon hers with an intensity which now found some vent in his deep voice.

"Clara, can you not guess what has brought me here, this morning?"

"Perhaps you wish to become one of my pupils," returned she, naively; not noticing in her very ingenuousness, that for the first time since she had known him, he had omitted the "Miss" in addressing her.

"To be one of your pupils," replied he, with a tender smile, "would indeed be a delicious privilege."

"Well, then," answered she, playfully, "I will take you on probation, but upon one 'condition precedent.'"

"You would only have to name it—"

"Really?" she interrupted, glancing up into his face with unsuspecting eagerness. "Then it is this: you are to give me another pupil at the same time in Dane."

The captain's eyes danced. Aha! here was a chance for a *coup*; and the ex-officer in H. M. S. had been noted for the skillful handling of his guns.

"Take me," he said, bending over the little hand caressingly, "and Dane shall be to you as a —"

"Oh!"

The suddenness of this explosive, the swiftness with which the hand flew from his grasp, and the evident state of panic into which his companion passed in a second of time, fairly astonished him, and he drew his chair a few inches away from her, while he surveyed her with very wide open eyes, abashed and silent.

Only for an instant had Clara's violet eyes responded, when they flashed a startled look into his. Then they sought occupation elsewhere. The beautiful head drooped slowly forward, the rounded cheeks glowed with a crimson stain which faded swiftly out of them and left them white as ivory.

Love communicates its secrets in many subtler ways than speech contrives. It betrays itself, too, more

certainly when it surprises its subject; but the moment the subject is conscious of its presence within, life assumes a new aspect, the world changes.

To Clara, love was revealing itself with an abruptness that frightened her. She was taken unawares by the sly little god; and in the surprise of the moment she betrayed her heart to the man who sat there, as mute as herself, but watching her with glowing eyes.

Her right hand hung unguardedly over the arm of her chair nearest him. He reached forward, and softly took it once more; and although she tried to draw it from him he held it only the faster; and she felt his own burning against her trembling fingers. Her bosom was agitated with emotions she could not understand; they were a mystery to her, and whether a sweet or a painful one she knew not. Her breath came quicker, and she trembled.

"There is but one boon, and I came here to ask it," murmured her lover.

Still she was silent. Her drooping chin had touched her bosom, whose rise and fall he saw with a kindling passion that quivered in every fiber of his body.

Perhaps the highest degree of felicity possible to human beings is reached when the heart first stirs with love; just as the heart deceived by the object of its love leaps down into the lowest depths of misery.

There was virgin love in the hearts of these two now; and they drank in the ecstasy of the moment like thirsty travelers who have crossed a Sahara whose dearth has ended at last by a spring of leaping waters.

The prim little parlor of the prim little Widow

Farnsworth had never before witnessed such a scene as this. The hair-cloth furniture setting stiffly against the white walls, the blue and gray carpet which was always damp because the sun was not permitted to shine upon it, the quaint portraits in ancient frames that hung sedately above the old oak wainscoting, like teachers of propriety, were made witnesses, for the first time in their dumb existence, of the first act in that beautiful life-drama which will be re-enacted again and yet again, as long, indeed, as hearts are human.

At last Clara raised her eyes, and very pure eyes they were, full of a divine light that came wandering timidly up from the depths of a very pure soul.

"Do you love me?" she asked softly; and the tremor in her voice added to its melody.

"Love you!"

For an instant, then, the calmness of the man gave way to the ardor of the lover. He leaned forward in his chair; and then, to her intense dismay, his arms were thrown about her pliant form, and he drew her to him in an irresistible embrace.

"Oh—Mr. Bardell!" exclaimed the frightened girl, struggling to free herself. "Please—"

But Mr. Bardell was at this instant too much engrossed by his own overpowering emotions to forego their enjoyment. He only folded her the closer to his breast, until he felt the palpitating little heart pulsing against his own.

"*Please* release me!" she pleaded, panting with excitement and the pressure of his strong arms, and two tears glittered on her long lashes.

Mr. Bardell saw them, and relented; and as she sank down into her chair, with averted eyes and crimson cheeks, he recovered himself, and sat bolt upright in his seat, like a school-boy on the stool of repentance.

"Did I frighten you very much?" he finally stammered, beginning now to show some compunction for her distress.

"Yes—that is—a little," was faintly murmured back.

"I'm—I'm a ruffian!" declared he, energetically. Then he waited a moment, watching her rosy face ruefully.

A swift glance of reproach and tenderness answered his self-accusation.

"Don't you think so?" ventured he, taking heart.

"No!"

The answer was soft as a zephyr, but it thrilled him.

"Then you forgive me, for my—my—"

He hardly knew what to term it, that passionate outburst, so natural, so spontaneous. His life had been so arid, you see; and the dew of heaven had suddenly fallen upon it for the first time. How could he have stayed the impulse to drink?

"You *do* forgive me?"

"Yes." A very gentle murmur, this time, and a deepening of the red in the peach-like cheeks, over which the chestnut curls were falling in ravishing confusion.

"Oh, thank you," returned he, fervently, and he folded his hands together, more than ever like a school-boy,

Then ensued a silence, that eloquent silence which needs no interpreter. These two hearts were coming together swiftly; their life-currents were about to unite; and speech or sound would have been profanation.

They could hear each others' hearts beat, though, in that rhythmic measure which was sweeter to them than the music of harps.

A man who loves, is, until his declaration of it, all expression; a woman who loves, is, until her confession of it, all repression. Her part, therefore, is the harder to sustain; and when it is ended it leaves her faint and languid.

Clara felt thus, when her lover returned to his first question; and she did not now attempt to withdraw her hand.

This time he spoke with a comical mixture of doubt, hope, and apology:

"Will you be my wife, Clara?"

Raising one little hand, she covered her eyes with it; and then he felt in his own hand an electric shock which went with the swiftness of lightning through his veins. Five little fingers lay in his palm, and they had given it the faintest possible pressure, trembling, timid, but—certain.

Then came from his lips like a loosened torrent those rapturous exclamations that are too sacred for repetition. Though not to words alone did he confine his lips. Again and again did they seek hers; and the store of honey he found there must have been inexhaustible, for it was two o'clock ere either of them

had realized that this was the widow's hour for dinner.

Happy Bardell! We have given him to taste of the sweetest fruits e'er plucked by tired hands from the dusty wayside of life. Let us felicitate him. Nor envy him; for he is yet to pluck fruit as black as this is golden!

CHAPTER IX

"I'LL PUT A SCORPION IN HIS NEST"

Among the public duties imposed upon the city clerk of Boston, was that of reading in the First Church, in Chauncey Place, the bans of all citizens who had finally determined upon taking the fatal—or felicitous—step toward the marriage-altar. This interesting business was conducted once a week, at the regular Thursday lectures of the Reverend Mr. Frothingham. These lectures were then held in the basement of the church; and, whether they were found especially delectable by the members of his flock, or because of the announcements that were always made by the clerk, the attendance was invariably large.

On the Thursday after Mr. Bardell's successful interview with Clara Phillips, the lecture and the "drawing card" referred to filled every seat in the hall; and one of these seats was occupied by the captain himself, a usual circumstance, since he was a good Unitarian, and a valued member of the First Church.

The last announcement made that morning by the clerk was of special interest to the captain; to-wit, the bans of Mr. Howard Bardell, late of England, etc., and Miss Clara Phillips, of the town of Lynn.

The genial face of the ex-officer exhibited the utmost satisfaction; and when his friends, at the close of

service, crowded about him with their congratulations, he received them with so jaunty an air as to call forth from the jovial minister another sly jest at his expense.

As soon as he could extricate himself from his numerous well-wishers, the captain hurried off toward his home, oblivious of everything save the bright contentment that filled his heart.

Ah, if only some good genius had whispered to him as he went on his way, softly whistling to himself—

"Turn back, look upon the wretch who remains behind in the vestry-room, listen to his mutterings, and be warned!"

But no good genius was there at his elbow. Or if there was it fled before the three Furies, who were pursuing the unconscious victim of infernal plots, and whose refrain he could not hear—

"Say that we may not prey at will on Man;
Nor glut our famished hate on human woe:
Say that the Laws are fixed; say that the plan
Of the wide Universe naught can o'erthrow:
Yet, though immutable, we those laws fulfill;
And, changing nothing, reap our harvest still."

But we, who are ubiquitous, who may pass at will through stone walls and through open windows with equal facility, will retrace our steps and enter the basement of the old church which the aged janitor is closing after the last of the congregation, and creep into the vestry-room—

Ah!

Bending over the register in which the records are

kept, and which the clerk has thrust into the drawer of the sexton's desk, is a figure as familiar to us as it is repulsive.

The figure of Joel Thorp.

With the stub of a carpenter's pencil he laboriously copies the entry made but half an hour ago, upon a book-leaf, thrusts it into the greasy pocket of his sur-tout, and shuffles to a stool, upon which he seats himself.

In a few minutes, listening the while, with corrugated forehead and pursed lips, he hears the old janitor leave the hall, and now he is alone—so he thinks to himself, forgetting the God whose sanctuary he is profaning.

Now he communes with himself aloud; a strange habit with such characters, but a frequent one. Vicious people are secretive, and much of their time is spent in solitude. It is in solitude that their fierce and restless brains are busiest; and they make companions of themselves when thus alone, carrying on a dialogue between the outer and the inner self.

"Goin' to be married, goin' to be married," muttered Joel, his bushy head bent down, his hands spread out on his threadbare knees. They were odd-looking members, those hands of his. Large, coarse and red, with the fingers bent inward, toward the horny palms, they resembled claws, and the long black nails were like talons.

The subject of his thoughts interested him strangely; his dark face worked itself into a caricature; the claw-like hands were dug fiercely into the patches of

his trousers, as though he imagined they were tearing the flesh of Howard Bardell, the skipper of the "Armadillo," who had put him in irons, who had turned him over to the master-at-arms to be lashed with stripes—twenty of them—on his bare back; the man who had caused him to lose an eye, increasing his ugliness, maiming him forever.

The scene on board the ship came back to him; the hiss of the lash sung its song of torment into his ears again; the chill of the iron manacles on his wrists crept around them again like the clammy coils of a snake; the blow of the cutlass maddened him again, and he saw the flash that scorched his very brain, at the moment the light went out of his stricken eye forever!

His broad, strong teeth were ground together until they cracked; his lips were drawn back from them until a ghastly, demoniacal grin overspread his face; his single eye glowed with a greenish light in the gloom of the shaded room; and at length, convulsed by the fury of his thoughts, he screamed—but the sound was driven back into his thick throat—

"Curse him, curse him! And the kid—curses on both! Blast my soul, but I'll follow them, both of 'em, till they're dead—dead!"

Rising from the stool, as he ground out this ominous threat through his clenched teeth, he went stealthily out into the school-room, unbolted a door, and let himself into the street.

Making his way toward the north end of the city, he entered a dingy wooden building, the upper story

of which projected several feet over the lower, and pushed his way through an unlatched door into a poorly furnished room, where sat, in rigid attitude, and silent expectation, two women.

"So you're back, are ye?" exclaimed one of them, with a feverish glance of inquiry in her inky eyes; inky, because there was absolutely nothing white around the pupil, the whole optic being of a mottled black color, and standing out of an ashen-colored face.

"It looks like I was."

Joel had shuffled into the room and slouched into a chair, a malignant and meaning smile playing in the corners of his sinister mouth.

"You've been longer than common," complained the woman, whose curiosity was evidently excited and her temper irritated by his manner.

"Some things are more important than others."

"Of course. What's up?"

The navy's going to be married, sure enough."

"Well?"

"To the milk-faced girl-teacher."

"Well, that ain't news. We knew it," grumbled the woman.

"Gad! I could prevent it, though," muttered Joel with a vicious chuckle.

"*You* could prevent it!" sneered the woman.

"Mebbe."

"Mebbe," snarled she, "don't you know? You had a mind of your own—oncet. Until *he* was your boss. But then you was his slave—"

"Shut up, blast ye!"

Joel made a threatening gesture, at which the woman shrugged her shoulders contemptuously.

"Curse him!" muttered he, as if in soliloquy; "I feel them blows yet."

"But they ain't paid for," sneered the woman, with a glitter in her inky eyes; "an' it's more'n two yéars since ye got 'em."

Joel looked moodily at the homespun carpet.

"Yer right," said he, with his teeth set; "it's an old account; but I'll pay good interest on't."

"How'll ye do it?" snarled the woman; "not by talkin' to yourself every night an' broodin' over it."

"Leave that to me." And, turning suddenly to the other, evidently a much younger woman than the first, although she wore a thick veil wrapped about her face, totally concealing all save her eyes, "I want *you* to do your part."

"I'm doing it."

The words were spoken quietly, and the voice had none of the grating harshness so conspicuous in that of her companion.

"Yes, you're doin' it," growled Joel, "an' you've done it well—so far."

"When is the wedding to be?" suddenly inquired the elder woman.

"In six weeks."

"An' you'll let it happen?" observed the woman, with a mocking laugh.

"Yes!" shouted Joel, rising suddenly to his feet, and extending his claw-like hand before him; "I'll let it happen; an' as soon as it does, I'll put a scorpion in his nest!"

CHAPTER X

THE THORP FAMILY ON COPP'S HILL

Joel Thorp had gone into the business of pawn-broking, soon after his inauspicious landing at Boston, and had opened a shop near the north end of Charter Street, where he would, as he supposed, be less subjected to the espionage of the officers of the law than in any more populous district of the city; and here he at once engaged in a questionable traffic with the sailors who at that time resorted to that uninviting locality. It mattered nothing to Joel who his customers were, what they brought, or where they obtained the goods they offered him; his only concern being to loan as low a per cent of their value as the necessities of the individual or his own shrewdness effected. He soon began to do a thriving business; and feeling the need of a helpmate, he looked around him for a suitable and willing person to fill that tender and conjugal position. Such a person he found in the supposed widow of a sailor, Mrs Anne Mock, a gaunt and harsh-featured woman of forty—his own age—and possessed of "extr'nary convictions," if we may accept his statement concerning the qualities which induced him to bestow upon her "his 'and and 'eart, likewise his 'umble 'ome at Copp's Hill."

His parental instincts had led him to consult his

son and daughter before making these numerous and important proffers to "Hannie," and much to his relief, after a somewhat stormy interchange of ideas between the three, Martha withdrew her objections to the match, on condition that she was allowed to take a situation as nurse to the children of a Dorchester family, which had been offered her; while Silas stipulated that the necessary equipment and stipend to enable him to attend the English High School should be forthcoming before the interesting event came off.

These domestic arrangements having been amicably made and concluded, the formidable "widder" had been led to the altar, resplendent in a costume of her own designing, out of materials furnished from the pawn shop, and had thence carried her convictions to the superannuated "'ome on the 'ill," the classical name it received from the lady herself.

Mrs. Mock was a woman of great spirit; and she fiercely espoused the cause of the Thorp household against the "skipper and his kid, on princerple," albeit she had not received a strictly true history of the one-sided feud from her cautious and secretive spouse; and the surprising homage paid to her convictions by that otherwise tyrannical individual led him usually to adopt her suggestions in forming his plans, though he sometimes attempted a brief rebellion against her hectoring.

Martha had left the parental roof to fill the situation of nurse, and Silas had entered the High School, some time previous to the events recorded in the last chapter. But Silas had also changed his domicile to

the genial hearth of the janitor of the school building; so that the "'ome on the 'ill" now sheltered but three persons, the third being a boy of ten years of age, whom Joel called his nephew.

Silas had made his preparations to remove absolutely from the precincts of Copp's Hill without consulting his father; and only upon the evening of his departure did he seek the latter for the purpose of proclaiming his emancipation.

This interview took place while Mrs. Thorp was temporarily absent on a visit to her old neighborhood; so that the coast was entirely clear for such mutual confidences as father and son might feel disposed or deem it advisable to exchange.

"Guv'ner," began Silas, as the two sat in the front room of their home, that evening, "I've fixed it with the janitor at the school-house to help him in his work, and he's to give me bed and board for it."

"Wot?"

Joel looked up, dumfounded.

"You heard me, didn't you?"

"I heerd somethin' like a joke, I think," rejoined his father, savagely.

"I mean it," said Silas. sententiously.

"Ye'll not do it."

"I will. It's all fixed, I tell you."

"Do it an' I'll stop the chowder," roared the sire, growing red with anger.

"Well," grumbled the boy, sullenly, "I'll get an education somehow."

Silas had all the dogged traits and perseverance of

his father; but he had also an ambition which would seem surprising after our acquaintance with Joel.

"How'll ye get it, ye whelp?" shouted the latter.

"I'll get it," repeated he.

The boy grew animated, as he made this confident answer, and further astonished his irascible parent by informing him that the janitor would give him his board and bed, and one suit of clothes a year, for choring, in addition to other work he was to do. The cold eyes of the youth shone with as much exultation as he was capable of evincing, and Joel, eyeing him askance, felt it would be useless to continue the contest.

Chuckling softly to himself, he turned toward his rebellious offspring, and with an admiring wink, observed amiably,

"Well, ye *air* a cute un, Sile; an' as for me, w'y I've nothink more to say. But," suddenly looking grave, "wot'll ye do with yure eddication wen ye get it, huh?"

"I'll climb up on it, somehow. Maybe I'll be a tutor in some gentleman's house."

"Good again," chuckled his thoughtful parent. Then, after some reflection, his steel-blue eye emitted a spark, his thick hand smote his patched knee, and he turned upon his son as though he would attack him.

"Hold a bit!" growled he, "air ye going to forget *them two*?"

The brows of the youth wrinkled, until his whole visage resembled that of an old man; a demonish light

danced in his eyes, and his voice even more plainly revealed the implacable spirit within him:

"*Forget* them!" cried he, shrilly, "not till my heart forgets to beat!"

"Brayvo, me lad," shouted Joel, clutching the boy's arm. "An' now, sence ye've showed the true spirit, I'll tell ye a secret. 'Taint a long yarn, but it's a interestin' one. I told yure es-teemed an' very intelligent step-mother to stop at Broad Street an' Hamilton Av'-noo, an' jaw that baker some more 'bout that dum bill o' his; an' w'en she is a doin' that sort o' business she's not likely to get through for some time; besides she's a-wisitin' old cronies to-night; so, as nobody's around except the boy, it's a good time to tell ye."

"Don't *she* know it, then?" demanded Silas, with a grin of blended surprise and amusement.

Joel pursed his thick lips, rolled his one eye toward the ceiling, and clawed at his chin.

"Sile," said he, confidentially, "she don't. Yer see," he continued, apologetically, "it were, as I may say, a hanty-nuptial agreement."

"A what?"

"W'y, it were this way:

"W'en I took your respected an' very intelligent step-mother to my buzzum, (because of her convictions, ye understand,) she said to me, sensible-like, 'Joel, there's one thing more to be agreed betwixt us, yet.' An' I said, 'Hannie, if it's about the boy a-livin' at 'ome, I can't consent. His father's roof is always open to him—'"

"Through the chimney, hey?" laughed Silas, who had glimmers of wit.

'An' I said," pursued Joel, dignifiedly ignoring the levity of his hopeful, "that my 'arth was allus here for him to warm himself by. An' I said, as for the gyurl, w'y, she's perwided for, an's gone to live independent seein' she thought she could not make her way proper in the world—w'ich is all before her—by bein' too familiar with her own fam'ly, w'ich was nat'ral, an' I didn't say no. But yure step-mother shot into the conversation, an' said, says she, "'Taint about the younguns, ijit.' (She's orful playful, yure es-teemed an'wery intelligent step-mother is, an' her langwitch is—is allus forcible.) 'It's this,' says she, 'you 'ave lived up to date, an' so 'ave I, likewise. Wot's past out is dead, an' wot's dead is buried—or orte be. Wery well, *you* dig nothink up, an' *I* dig nothink up, an' there won't be no trouble atween us in the futur.' Is' it agreed, deary?" An' I said,

" 'Hannie, I'll put yure convictions against any man's judgment—even m'own; it's agreed, an' mum's the word.'"

"So ye see, me lad, I needn't rake a muck-heap for her benefits, need I?"

"Course not. Now, tell me the secret."

"Wery well," assented his father, drawing his chair closer to the other, and assuming a manner quite at variance with his recent humor. "Listen close, lad; an' don't say nothink till I'm through."

"Wait a minute. Is there blood and murder in it?"

"Blood enough, an' murder enough, but nobody's

blood was seen, an' nobody was hung for murder," returned Joel, with a vicious leer. "Now I'll tell it—"

CHAPTER XI

AN OATH OF VENGEANCE SEALED

"Afore I married yure mother, Sile, I was a boss carpenter in the ag-ed town of Carlisle, Cumberland, in the ex-treme north of England, with all its ports on the Irish Sea, an' Liverpool its nearest great un. Away down at the ex-treme south end of England is the ag-ed town of Winchester, in Hampshire, with all *its* ports on the English Channel, an' Southampton *its* nearest great un. There were not much wisitin' a-twixt the two ex-treme parts in them times, except in tradin' lines, an' only the gentry of the two ends knowed much about wot was goin' on in eyether. Stick that in yure mind, Sile, an' remember, 'cos it has summut to do with this story.

"Well, while I was a-workin' at me trade in Carlisle, I made chums with Jem Crouch, an' both of us bein' forehanded we went to live at the Royal Inn, the best in Carlisle. Jem were a barge-owner, runnin' on the Solway Firth and up the Eden River to Carlisle. Him an' me was both thirty-six an' unmarried. But Jem had two orful purty sisters a-workin' as maids at the Royal. One of 'em was Sary, a widder with one child, a be-yootiful one-year old gyurl, the father 'aving been a fine gentleman wot went off to France an' married an' never made no perwision for them, an' died there.

"The other gyurl was Marthy—that wos yure mother—we mourn her loss. I took to Marthy, an' she took to me; an' arter a bit the bans wos read in church, reg'lar, an' the weddin' wos to come off immediate.

"Ten days afore the happy ewent, a great misfortin' 'appened. It's a four hours' walk from Carlisle up to Penrith, an' a hour's walk from Penrith to Greystoke Castle. Well, one day some of the gentry from the Castle come down to Carlisle to look through the old tower w'ere Queen Mary Stuart wos took an' locked up after she refugeed in Carlisle, 'avin' been defeated at Langside, an' good Queen Bess not wishin' to 'ave her at liberty no longer in England.

"The people of the Castle wos related to Queen Mary, an' the wisitors wot came with them wos curious to see where the Howard blood suffered.

"One of the gentlemen wos Mr. Walter Walraven, of Winchester, an' his lady wos with him. One wos Captain Howard Bardell, the skipper of the Armadillo, a bachelor. He wos a cousin of the master of the Castle. There wos some more ladies—two.

"Well, it rained in the forenoon, an' kept it up in the afternoon, an' the party concluded to take rooms at the Royal over night, an' drive back next day.

"The ladies didn't have no maids with 'em, but the landlord said he could supply 'em with the best, for that night.

"The next mornin' there were a great ho an' hallo from the lady Walraven 'bout 'aving been robbed in the night of her waluable jewel-box. It wos a excitin' time then! Mr. Walraven wos excited, an' the

skipper from Liverpool was excited. They said the jewels was worth twelve thousand pounds an' was heir-looms. Well, Mr. Walraven an' the skipper said there was thieves among the servants, an' they must all be took into the dining-hall one at a time an' examined.

"It was done; an' him an' Captain Bardell was the examiners an' the judges.

"Jem an' me was waitin' out in the stable-yard for the gyurls, not fearin' nothink but anxious-like. After a long time, yure mother come out, cryin'.

"'Wot is it?' says Jem, frownin' because Sary wasn't with her.

"'They've charged it on *us*!' sobs yure mother.

"'W'y?' says Jem, cold as ice, an' lookin' black.

"'Cause I helped Mrs. Walraven in her rooms last night, an' Sary undressed her, an' was in there after she were asleep, foldin' her things an' tidyin' up. An' I'm discharged,' says she, 'an' Sary has got to go to jail with a bailiff.' Then yure mother broke down and Jem went off to see after the beastly business.

"Sary went to jail, denyin' she was a thief, an' I married yure mother, an' six months after that Sary died of jail fever. Then Jem, who had been a prowl-in' round the country, never speakin' to nobody, sold out his intrust in the barge, an' dusted. Nobody knowed w'ere he went to—then.

"I never had no peace with yure mother, she took on so hard about bein' disgraced an' nobody speakin' to her; but she were that gamey that she wouldn't leave Carlisle, an' we stayed it out. But w'en her

sister died she give up. You vos born, an' a year an' twenty-three months after that yure sister vos born. Then yure poor mother said, 'There's one more to bear the burden of my disgrace,' an' purty soon that burden killed her. An' her death vos at the docrs of Mr. Walraven an' the skipper.

"Afore Sary died, she sent for a pious old soul wot vos allus comin' to see the prisoners in the jail, an' she begged him to 'dopt her gyurl. He had no little un of his own, an' he took the child, 'aving took an amazin' fancy to the purty, old-fashioned chick. Then Sary told him as how she had all by herself wrote down the history of the robbery, she bein' a persecuted wictim an' would he swear to take it all sealed up, an' deliver it to a bank in Carlisle, an' bring her the bank's receipt showin' they vos to hold' it an' deliver it to her darter at twenty—no, one and twenty. An' she would pay the bank for the service, an' he said yes.

"So she give him the package, an' it vos put in a bank an' she got the receipt, an' old Piety took the gyurl home. Then Sary died.

"After awhile, Jem come back, sullen as ever. He got a sitiuation up at Greystoke Castle, an' I quarreled with him; but he said curious-like, 'Wait.' So he went off to be gardener there.

"That summer there were some visitors up there an' Mrs. Walraven were one of 'em. One night there were a ball; it was in the summerest kind of weather, an' Mrs. W. went out into the grounds about midnight, all alone, to cool off a bit. But Mrs. W.

never come into the castle again. Never mind wot wos done to find her, they didn't find nothin', an' it's a mystery to this day—to most.

"A month after the sad ewent, Jem left his sitiuation. He said it were not interestin' no more, an' besides, he didn't feel comfortable up there no more. He went off to Guernsey, an' smuggled awhile, nearly starvin', an' then showed up again.

"One night Jem wrote me a letter (he were a good scholard) an'—'Walraven's still a-grievin,' he says, 'an' he's goin' to America, in a fortnight, on the Armadillo, which is the ship of Captain Bardell, bound from Liverpool to Boston. If you remember wot I remember, meet me next Saturday night at ten, at Gretna.'

"Well, we planned to come over on the Armadillo, *to keep them two company*. We hadn't heerd before we shipped, that Mr. Walraven had a child. It had never come to Cumberland with him an' his wife, an' no gossip come to us from tother end of England. We wos astonished w'en we saw the kid; but we wos pleased, too.

"Well, ye recklek I set ye to spyin' purty soon arter we wos nested, an' yure obserwations were a success. Our operations wos not. There's a deal o' difference, Sile, 'twixt obserwations *and* operations. Sometimes there's a worm in the happle, w'ich we don't obserwate. There were a worm in hour'n. The money-box got us into trouble; all a-owin' to the worm--Dane Walraven. Yure aweer wot 'appened from then on.

"There's one more thing, howsumdever, w'ich is

a burr on my mind, an' w'ile I'm limbered I'll include it in my remarks. It air this: Walter Walraven come on shore that night with his 'ead queer. 'Ow do ye suppose it 'appened? The skipper said it were from jammin' against the rocks. Two individuals know, me an' Jem. Lean for'ard, an' I'll whisper it to ye—"

Joel had told his story with a tense strain upon his features and his voice, leaning forward at the last, to impart some black secret to his depraved son which he dared not reveal to the walls. His hands had rested upon his patched knees, grasping them rigidly, his one eye had glowed and darkened by turns, his dark face broadening and contracting as his thoughts and feelings changed from moment to moment.

When he had finished, he drew back his chair, and stared moodily down at the rough boards under his hobnailed boots.

Silas had been absolutely mute during the slow recital; but not from stolidity. His boyish face was almost a reflection of his father's in its vindictive expression.

At length, Joel lifted his bushy head, and peered darkly out of his single eye, the empty socket of the other giving his ugly face at the moment a most weird and evil aspect.

"Now, me lad," said he, slowly, and breathing hard, "do ye understand yure bounden dooty to yer mother?"

"Curse 'em, yes!" came the quick response, and the boy's hands were clenched convulsively.

"An' do ye remember the drubbin' the d—d skipper o' the Armadillo giv'e to ye, because ye wouldn't stay below, like a dog?"

Silas uttered a sort of moan but quickly suppressed it.

"I'll *always* remember it, curse him!" he said, fiercely.

"An' remember the bloody stripes the d--d skipper made his ruffians give yure father, degradin' 'im forever?"

"I remember," muttered Silas.

"An' the losin' of m' eye, w'ich the said skipper knocked out, like a brute as he were?"

"I remember," again repeated the boy, with a somber look, but quivering now with conflicting passions which his father was deliberately stirring up in his young breast.

"An' ye remember, lad, who wos the cause of all them misfortins? Sile, *it wos the kid!*"

Silas sprang from his chair, his youthful face livid, distorted.

With a vicious smile, Joel noted the effect of his eloquence. He had wrought the boy into a frenzy. He extended his crooked fingers.

"Swear that ye'll help me against 'em—to the death," said he, huskily.

And promptly the answer was hissed back:

"To the death!"

CHAPTER XII

THE MARSHAL'S VISIT TO THE ASYLUM

The corporate existence of the city of Boston began in 1822. Its growth during the ten years following had been steady and substantial. The population was then about eighty thousand. The area of the oblong peninsula reaching from Massachusetts Bay southwest to Roxbury embraced three hills—Beacon, rising to an elevation of one hundred and ten feet on the west; Fort, an eminence of eighty feet, facing the harbor on the east; and Copp's, rising some fifty feet above tide-water, at the north end. These hills have long since melted down to the merest slopes.

The "Mill Dam," now called Western Avenue, and reaching westwardly from Beacon Street, was not then the broad and noble causeway over which hundreds of fine equipages now are hourly seen, but a desolate appearing roadway, with modest and uninviting houses accentuating its sides and extending beyond through the now beautiful and populous suburb of Brookline.

West Boston bridge had been built, extending from the intersection of Cambridge and Charles Streets to the shady lanes of Cambridge; another, Canal bridge, also connecting this suburb at Lechmere Point with the city at Brighton Street. North and Charles River bridges, at the north end, reached over to Charlestown;

the Sea Street free bridge crossed the channel to South Boston, and another free bridge gave the same connection, crossing from Front Street at the narrowest part of the city—at that point a mere neck—reaching from Front on the east to Tremont on the west. Front Street is now called Harrison Avenue; and a glance at a modern map of Boston will give the curious a surprise, when it is seen that the enterprise of its citizens has robbed the waters of all that domain lying east of Harrison Avenue and west of Tremont, at their junction with Dover. Tremont for six hundred feet faced directly on the "back water" to the west; while Charles, from Boyleston to Beacon, faced and bordered the "city land," a dreary twenty acre tract of marsh west of the common, and sloping into the receiving basin.

The length of the city was then about three miles; hence, the entire surveillance of all parts of the town was not so difficult a task for its guardians as a single district now is. But the duties imposed upon them by the council were such as would have taxed the utmost capacity of the man with the seven-leagued boots to perform in modern Boston. It was the special duty of the marshal to travel over and through every street and lane in the city at least once each week, on a tour of discovery and of inspection.

Now, the marshal lived in the north end of the town; and he usually started on his rounds at eight o'clock in the morning. The most isolated of his routes was Copp's Hill. That region was then chiefly devoted to burial purposes, and the few habitations in the vicin-

ity of the graveyards were those of the humbler classes, principally; the houses were mostly of wood, and were of an antique and austere style, which added much to the gloomy aspect of the locality. On the west side of the graveyard embankment the river then ran close in-shore, its eternal monologue sounding like a requiem, as it washed the sand from the rocks below.

In this dreary district, at the corner of Salem and Charter Streets, stood the ancient three-story brick mansion-house of old Governor Phipps. The building was erected prior to the year 1695, but was still in an excellent state of preservation. It was now used as an Asylum for Indigent Boys; and the institution was presided over by "Mother Wolcott," a most estimable and large-hearted lady as matron, assisted by a score of carefully selected and trained teachers and attendants.

Here, boys who had no means, and no relatives, were provided with homes, and trained to intelligent and useful employments; and the name, character, and location of the asylum had become familiar to every humble citizen in the city.

Among those who sometimes looked in, whether out of curiosity or a desire to see what accommodations were afforded the inmates, was the marshal. He was a benevolent man, and had taken a fancy to stop at the asylum at intervals, to chat with the matron, and hear the sometimes interesting and pathetic stories of the unfortunate waifs who from time to time sought its protecting walls.

On a sharp January morning following the events

recently recorded, the marshal left his home at an unusually early hour, his business taking him on that particular day to Copp's Hill. Feeling the nip of the wind, as he passed the asylum, he decided to call on the matron, and enjoy a little toasting over the great heater in her comfortable reception-room.

Before he reached the steps, however, another visitor had ascended them, with a timid and hesitating manner, as if doubtful of an agreeable reception, and raising the iron knocker, had sent a peal through the halls that promptly brought the matron herself to the door.

Opening a wicket in the center panel, through which she could converse freely, but which did not admit of so much as a glimpse of the small object standing on the step without, Mother Wolcott sharply hailed the supposed tradesman who had disturbed her at her breakfast:

"Well, now, good man, what brings you here at this hour? Have you been running a race with the sun? If you have, you're ahead of him. But it's too early for trading, man; come later."

But to this vigorous greeting there was no response. Somewhat surprised at this, and hearing no movement outside, the matron's curiosity prompted her to unbolt and reconnoiter.

"Sure," she murmured, as she rattled the bolt-chain, "it cannot be the old governor himself, coming to potter about the old homestead, or to call us bodies to account for using it public!"

But the person who confronted her, when the great

door swung back, was somewhat more tangible than the old governor's ghost. It was a small boy, shabbily dressed, shivering with the cold (it was the memorable 27th day of January) and blowing his frosted fingers with blue and stiffened lips.

The matron glanced at him keenly, and ejaculated: "Mercy on me! It's another of 'em!"

The boy had taken off his thin and threadbare cap, and was holding it in his red hands with as much grace as if he had been a gentleman's son. Indeed, his frank though half-frozen face bore the stamp of natural gentility; and had he been a well-fed and well-clothed boy, he would have been in appearance as well as manners—"a gentleman's son."

The matron stared at the curly head, as it bent with a respectful bow, and into the clear blue eyes that were lifted inquiringly and wistfully to her motherly face, and held out her plump hand.

"Come in, child," in a voice that was musical to the shivering lad, though a little shrill to the servants inside; and she drew him into the warm hall, and closed the door.

During this incident, the marshal had stood on the pavement a few yards away, an unobserved but a decidedly interested observer. There was a very pleasant smile on his own red face, as he turned away; and a thoughtful look came stealing into it, as he said to himself:

"That boy's face takes right hold of me—it does so!" And after he had walked briskly forward for a dozen yards or so, he concluded his soliloquy with emphasis: "Yes, I'm going to see more of this—I am so."

A dozen times that day he thought of the lad at the asylum door; and that night when he entered his childless but pleasant home, he said to his good-natured wife, to whom he had told the incident while they sat looking into the fire:

"Somehow, I feel as if it was fortunate that I saw it;" and then he added, half-musingly:

"I'm going to see more of this."

What was it that impressed him? He could not have told himself. But, if his meaning was not prophetic his words were: he was going to see a great deal more of "it."

CHAPTER XIII

CHARLIE VINCENT'S STORY

The ordering of human events, if confined to one sentient and occult power, is an operation of intelligence, and calls for the exercise of wisdom which none save an omnipotent God can be presumed to possess. Accidental meetings, acts at "hap-hazard," chance occurrences, casualties, all these are but hollow phrases, exposing the feeble subterfuges to which our helpless minds resort in the hopeless effort to explain life's happenings. The trite reflection that great events often find their causation in a bundle of trivial circumstances, is constantly recurring to our minds, when we see it again and again proven in our own and others' lives; until at length the thinker ceases to say of the most insignificant happening:

"It is of no consequence."

The unusual energy of the marshal on a frosty morning; the subtle (and perhaps self-unconscious) workings of his mind which impelled his feet at a particular moment in the direction of the asylum; the unknown and perhaps innumerable concatenation of circumstances, inducements, and impulses which led the friendless boy to the door of the refuge at the moment the marshal reached it; the unexplainable interest of the latter in the strange waif—all these and many other

following circumstances led to the enactment of part of a life-drama in which good and evil contended to the death; and gave to the little waif at the door an importance incalculable in the life-struggle we are yet to describe.

Let us now enter the warm and cheerful sitting-room of Mother Wolcott, since the fate of this boy concerns us, and learn what disposition she will make of him. Be sure she will not turn him out into the street again. She was not one of the army of everyday saints who regard misfortune as a crime second only to that of murder.

We find her holding his stiffened fingers in her warm hands, and chafing them while she puts the necessary questions in a voice at once gentle and sympathetic.

"Now, my child," she said, seating him near the glowing stove fire, "you may tell me your errand, though I think I know it."

The boy's voice was singularly musical, and it carried in its tones the burden of a sorrow, as he answered:

"If you please, ma'am, I was told that if I came here and told all about myself, I could be taken care of."

The matron scrutinized him curiously. "What is your name?" she asked quietly.

"Charlie Vincent, and I am eleven years old."

"Ah. Is that your *real* name?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," replied the boy, opening his eyes widely with surprise, and he added, reassuringly:

"I was born with it."

This naive remark, spoken with earnestness, brought

a smile into the benevolent face. But she observed, with perfect gravity:

"Indeed! Then it must be your very own."

"Yes, ma'am," gravely.

"Very well. Now, master Charlie, have you a mother and father, or either?"

The boy looked down at his feet, his expressive features clouding, as he murmured:

"Mother and father died ever so long ago."

"And you have no relations?"

"No, ma'am, but Joel Thorp he says he is my uncle—but he isn't."

"Where do you live?"

The matron's voice had grown a little tremulous. The grave and subdued manner, the sad but honestly brave little face, the evident intelligence, yet friendless appearance of the lad, all were eloquently appealing to her woman's heart, and drawing her to him.

"I *did* live with Joel Thorp," replied he, with a visible shudder, "but I have run away from him, and," with a sudden defiance in his tone, "I won't go back there again."

"And who is this Thorp?"

The boy's eyes flashed with indignation, as he answered, vehemently:

"He's the baddest man in the whole world!"

"Ah? And where does this bad man live?"

"Right up at the end of this street—Charter Street, ma'am. But he keeps a pawnbroker's shop in it."

"And how did he come by you?"

"I was pawned to him," replied the boy, with earnestness

"What? Tell me all about it."

"Why, I'll just tell you how it was. You see, Joel Thorp has a partner, and his name is Jemmy Crouch. Well, I was workin' for Mr. Murray, the baker, at the corner of Broad Street and Hamilton Avenue, and Joel bought all his bread and cakes and pies there, and never paid Mr. Murray any money, and they had a quarrel. The morning after the quarrel Jem Crouch came into the bakery. I never saw him before, and I didn't know he was Joel Thorp's partner, and Mr. Murray didn't either. Well, I had to sleep down in the shop; and Jem Crouch was asking me about it, and said it was too cold for a small boy like me. So he said to Mr. Murray that he wanted a trusty lad, and would he let me go for a month to work in an office on the wharf. And Mr. Murray said yes, if I wanted to. So I went with him; but he took me to Joel Thorp's shop up here, and said to Joel that he wanted to pawn a boy. And Joel, he said all right, and they laughed. Then Joel told me he was my uncle, and if I ever said no, he'd cut my ears off, and maybe worse. He wouldn't let me go out of the shop; and that night Mr. Murray's house was burned up, and him and Mrs. Murray and his three children were burned up in it. Joel took my clothes and put them in the shop, and gave me these old things, and watched me like a cat, so I couldn't see or talk to anybody; and he told me about the fire, and that I had no home but his. I reckon he had been praying to the bad man for the house to burn up, because he told Mr. Murray when they quarreled that he would ruin him before

the next sun was in China. Well, he made me do all kinds of hard work, and near starved me. So, a boy told me about this place; and I thought I would come here. I won't go back *there* any more."

"And your name—what is it?"

"Charlie Vincent."

"Does Joel Thorp know you were coming here?"

"Oh, no, ma'am!" exclaimed the lad, with a frightened look, "and *please* don't tell him!"

"No, I will not tell him. So, that is the whole story, is it?"

Charlie reflected a moment.

"That's all about me," he replied, "but Joel was always talking with Jem Crouch most every night about a man and a boy they hated, and were going to pay off old scores. And when they talked of it they always got excited, and said terrible things."

"Never mind, my child, you will stay here, now."

"Oh, ma'am, shall I, though?" cried the boy; and springing from his seat he seized the matron's hand, while his lips quivered painfully. His long-pent misery flooded forth in sobs and tears now; and his little manful breast relieved itself on the bosom of the first friend he had found since his mother's life went out.

Within a week after this adoption, the marshal called at the asylum, and made Charlie's acquaintance; and at the end of his rather long sitting, the officer informed Mother Wolcott that he intended to keep an eye on the lad.

"And," he concluded, "maybe I'll train him to be a detective yet!"

CHAPTER XIV

BOYLESTON BURIAL GROUND ROBBERS

On the morning of the 29th day of April, the sun rose blood-red over the sweltering city of Boston. At noon, the temperature was ninety degrees, inside the doorway of the City Hall.

In the Common, the trees and grass were as green as in June; the flowers were blooming exuberantly, birds were twittering overhead, and insects droning in the drowsy air.

A feeling of languor pervaded the few who were abroad in the sun; and the shops along Tremont Street were deserted, the street silent.

At twelve o'clock of that phenomenally hot day, a man and a woman entered the Common through the central entrance from Tremont Street, and walked slowly southward toward the Boyleston burial-ground, where they seated themselves upon one of the wooden benches near the Charles Street mall.

This little realm of the dead, originally a tract of one acre wedged out of the extreme south end of the Common, had been gradually encroached upon by the living who made a broad footpath for "a short cut" among the tombs; until finally the council had caused the strip now running from Tremont to Charles to be opened as a mall. There is now a considerable space between the graveyard and the iron fence facing Boyle-

ston Street; but at that date this mall had no existence. Otherwise, the aspect of the place has changed but little. There are one hundred and fifty tombs in this ancient enclosure; and within them repose the dead of four generations. Within the iron fence, close to the Beacon Street mall, and extending northward for a considerable distance, is a grass-roofed terrace of tombs with a central wall through its entire length, dividing full length recesses. These recesses are about four feet apart, and are secured on the outside—facing Beacon and Tremont Streets respectively—by square iron doors with strong locks.

On the stone coping over many of these mortuary chambers he who reads may see the name of the pale occupant cut in the stone or painted upon it, with other solemn details, and always a number; but here and there he will see nothing to indicate who lies within the dark and grisly receptacle, nothing save the mysterious number.

It was in front of one of these nameless apertures that the two strangers had seated themselves. Not strangers to us, however, for the single steel-blue eye and empty socket in one of the faces unmistakably belong to Joel Thorp, while the greenish-gray eyes of the woman betray the identity of the former Mrs. Mock, supposedly the wife now, of the master of the 'ome on the 'ill. Supposably, not certainly, as we shall hereafter discover.

Now and again some fagged pedestrian, more observant or more suspicious than the rest, would cast a sidelong glance at the pair, whose ill-favored counte-

nances would certainly have invited no man's confidence, and generally excited aversion. These glances, however, were entirely unheeded by the silent couple, whose gaze remained steadily and intently fixed upon the iron door, as though like ghouls they waited for it to yawn and give up to them some ghastly prey.

A distant bell had slowly tolled the hour of one, when the sharp eyes of the woman turned toward the southwest entrance, approaching which were three men bearing a plain wooden box.

In a moment she was on her feet.

"Get up!" she whispered, tugging at Joel's sleeve, "we're too near. Let's walk around outside so that we won't be noticed."

But Joel, who was oppressed by the heat, continued to nod in his seat under the great elms, and muttered vaguely:

"What for?"

Mrs. Thorp bent her angular body over him, grasped him by the collar, and shrilled into his drowsy ear:

"Get up, you ijit! they're coming!"

Fully roused now, he rose and followed her out into Boyleston Street, where they proceeded to promenade slowly back and forth until the men had passed in, when they walked around into Beacon Street, watching the particular iron door with feverish eagerness.

Meanwhile, the three men with the coffin-box had deposited it, opened the door with a key, and drawn from the chamber a long rosewood coffin covered with a bluish mold. This they placed in the box, which they were in the act of screwing down, when a policeman confronted them.

"What are you doing?" he demanded, suspiciously, glancing from one to the other.

With perfect composure, one of the three, who had been directing the others, answered:

"Moving a relative's remains."

"Whose?" persisted the inquisitive officer.

"Oh," retorted the other, flippantly, "corpses is all alike, they ain't nothing and nobody's."

"Have you a permit to remove it?"

The policeman's scrutiny assumed a severity which appeared to create a spasm in the breasts of Joel and his wife; they crept closer to the iron fence, and listened with increased eagerness.

With a sullen movement, the man addressed took from his pocket a paper, which he handed to the officer. The latter read it carefully through, passed it back, and observed:

"It's signed by James Crouch, assistant superintendent of burial-grounds. That ain't exactly regular, but I s'pose it's all right."

"Of course," grumbled the other, thrusting the paper back into his pocket, and re-adjusting the lid of the box, which the policeman had pushed aside.

"It looks queer, though," muttered the latter.

"Queer, eh? Well, you don't think we're stealing corpses, do you? Especially such stale ones as this here, and in broad daylight, too."

"No, that wouldn't be likely," assented the officer, moving away.

His suspicions would have had a lively reawakening, had he noticed the couple peering in at him during

this colloquy; but the extraordinary heat had rendered him as listless as it had others, and perhaps a little indifferent, and he passed on slowly out of the grounds, followed by the three gleaming eyes until he was out of sight.

The manner of the watchers now changed completely. An exultant smile intensified the ugliness of both, as they hurried away from the fence.

"Everything is all right, so far," chuckled Joel, as they turned into Charle Street.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Thorp, dryly, "the hot sun helped uncommon; it's kept people off the streets consider'ble, an' encouraged 'em to mind their own business—them that is out."

"Your convictions was right again, my dear," observed Joel, with an admiring leer; "you told Jem to have the permit ready, an' the men, so that the business could be done w'en the weather was fittest, w'ich was most intelligent, Mrs. Thorp, an' does honor to yure convictions."

The woman striding by his side scarcely heard this flattering commentary. She was absorbed in thought.

"You saw the man put there?" she suddenly asked.

"With m' own—eye."

"And you saw with 'your own eye' the medal on his breast?"

"Hangin' by a gold chain."

The woman nodded her satisfaction. Then it's hangin' there yet, an' 'twill prove it's *him*," she concluded, grimly.

"Of course. An' now, about the witness at the other end?"

"Jem was to write to the girl; an' of course he's done it."

"An' she'll go; she has my blood an' temper, an'—
she remembers."

CHAPTER XV

THE GRAVE-DIGGERS AT CHESTNUT HILL

On the morning of the mysterious removal of the coffin from the Boyleston Street burial-ground the assistant superintendent sat in the office of his superior, writing a letter. After he had finished, he took it in both hands, turned himself in his chair with a squirming movement, and read it aloud, probably to hear how it would sound. It bore no name at the top, but began abruptly, and ran as follows:

"Go out to Chestnut Hill to the graveyard, to-morrow night, one hour after dark. Pass along the avenue with the reservoir on your left until you come to the bend in the road. There turn into the burying-ground to your right, and proceed until you come to three large pine trees on your left. There to your right you will see a square raised space enclosed by a gray stone base, just beyond a long gray stone vault which juts out of a mound and faces the path at that point. At the middle of the front of the base there is an entrance to the square enclosure, formed by a square stone slab with three stone steps rising above it. Over a tomb in the enclosure is a black urn; and cut in the facing slab is a number—150—and a name also. (Note this description carefully.)

"Sit down on the lowest of the three steps, and watch the sunken ground running along past the three pine trees. Two men will bring something there, and will leave it under the trees. What you see must be remembered; you may have to swear that you saw it, hereafter. Be careful, therefore, to take notice of everything; and do you neither move nor speak while the work is being done under the trees. Wait there, until one of the two men comes to you, and says:

"'It is there.'

"Then you will answer, 'I have seen all.'

"You will then return to the city, by the Gardener road, as fast as you possibly can."

No name was signed to this mysterious epistle; but at its close, there was a circle drawn in red ink, with some unintelligible initials on the inside of the circle.

When the letter was enveloped and sealed, Mr. Crouch called an office boy.

"Take this to number five hundred and thirty-two," said he, "and come straight back here. Don't wait."

Three-quarters of an hour had elapsed, when the boy returned.

"You stayed a long time," snarled the official.

"Well, she made me wait while she read it," explained the messenger.

"Oh, she did, eh? Well, how did she act?"

"She said she understood it, and would be there on time; but she turned very pale, and kept drawing her breath hard, and then she shoved the letter in the bosom of her dress and hurried out of the house, and I came away."

"Very well. Now take this one to Mr. Bardell, at precisely nine o'clock to-night, and don't fail to deliver it to him, personally," putting another sealed letter into the boy's hand. Then he buttoned his coat tightly over his lean chest, and with an evil smile at his own thoughts, left the building.

Eight o'clock that evening, one hour after dark, a young woman wearing a black veil closely wrapped about her head and face, turned into the burial-ground at Chestnut Hill, and going directly toward the enclosure described in the letter whose contents we have given, seated herself on the wide stone slab.

It was an uncanny place for a woman at such a time; an isolated spot, with few passers-by in the daytime, far from any house or habitation, and now full of gruesome shadows that shifted about like restless spirits. Overhead, the black trunks of lofty chestnut trees uprose in ghostly groups, their wide-spreading branches richly but darkly clothed with shivering foliage, while the wind whispered among the crisp leaves that eternal song for the dead which one always hears there.

While the girl looked about her with a cautious movement through her black veil, she showed no trepidation or sign of fear; and having satisfied herself that she was absolutely alone, she rested her arm against the side of the base, her chin upon her hand, and gave herself up, apparently, to profound thought.

Of what could she have been thinking, in that solemn place, alone with the dead? What had she come to witness among those ghastly sleepers? Was

it some deed of sacrilege? a profanation? a resurrection? A strange mission, surely; but the moment of explanation was at hand.

Suddenly there came to her listless ears the grinding sound of wheels on the graveled road that skirted the great lake of murmurless water. The sound came nearer, and the wheels moved slower, until at last they stopped at the point where she had turned into the graveyard. Then, through the thick night-mists the forms of two men approached the three pines in front of her, carrying a long coffin box of dark wood, and laid it down at the foot of the largest of the trees. Returning to the vehicle which stood in the road, they took from it each a spade and mattock, brought these to the spot, and began rapidly digging—a grave.

The hooded face of the girl was turned steadfastly toward them; not a word escaped her, not a movement was discernible, while they kept on through the dragging minutes—until an hour had been spent in hollowing and deepening the grave. When they had finished their dismal task, they lifted the coffin-box over the pit, and lowered it down with ropes. Then the earth was rapidly thrown in, and trampled down, and some turf gathered and packed over the moist loam, and the work was done.

During all this time not a word had broken the impressive stillness; but now, one of the men came slowly toward the girl, and leaning forward, said in a distinct tone:

"It is there!"

Without waiting for an answer, he turned away, re-

joined his companion, and the two went out to the road. In another moment the sound of rapid wheels stirred the silence, fast receding, dying away, and leaving the same profound stillness as before.

But the girl, as if her weird surroundings held her to the spot as in a spell, sank down again upon the gray stone, and a sound that was something like a moan, escaped her. Leaning her head upon one hand, she looked, with the black cowl muffling and concealing her face, like some ghoulish visitant from Eblis.

Suddenly, while she sat shivering, eyeing the tombstone nearest her, the moon rose in full and cloudless splendor. Its first beams rested upon the face of the gray headstone upon which her gaze had fallen with melancholy abstraction, and—with a start as if a spirit had risen before her—she read this one sweet word, cut deeply in the headstone:

"MOTHER."

She stood up, panting, her dark garb paling in the sheen of the white moonlight, still gazing on that name, her form trembling, sobs struggling from her heaving bosom.

Then, with a quick gesture of defiance flung at the ghostly pines in front of her, as though they were her accusers, she darted away from the spot, out into the solitary road, along the still and sparkling reservoir, and vanished among the winding paths toward the sleeping city.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RANSOM OF A DEAD MAN

The marriage of Captain Howard Bardell and Clara Phillips had been consummated at the First Church, a short tour had been made, and the Tremont Street residence had received them.

Never, perhaps, had lovelier bride entered a home as its mistress, than the fortunate captain brought in to his; and never, perhaps, were man and woman better mated. The horizon of their double life was spotless, and they rightly felt that their future ought to be at once peaceful and happy.

It was noonday. April was making its exit in all the brilliant colors, and with all the languid airs of June. Its breath was like the dew from poppies, bringing to the senses sleepy reveries.

Seated by an open window was the captain, watching with half-closed eyes and placid smile the humming-bird industriously darting in and out of the honeysuckle bells that wreathed the window frame. A sweet song was rippling down to him from the chamber above, taught by the captain to his fair young wife—

“He passed red Penrith’s Table Round,
For feats of chivalry renowned;
Left Mayborough’s mound, and stones of power
By Druids raised in magic hour;
And traced the Eamont’s winding way,
Till Ulfo’s lake beneath him lay.”

Upon the soft carpet at his feet, his golden head pillowed on one plump arm, lay the boy who had crept into his heart before her, and now shared its warmth, drowsing through the heated noonday.

The old Scotch housekeeper peered into the room, and held out a soiled letter.

"It came last night," she explained, "after you had taken the last wink, and I wouldnae arouse ye. So I laid it on the kitchen shelf, an' not until this minute did I remember it."

The captain took the letter, with an indulgent smile, and broke the seal. And this is what he read:

"MR. HOWARD BARDELL, SIR:—I obtained the situation of assistant superintendent of burial-grounds through your influence, and by your help. I wanted the place for a particular purpose—to rob the grave of the body of a deadly enemy—Walter Walraven. You have, therefore, been my accomplice in stealing the corpse of your friend, and the father of the boy you have adopted. You can right the wrong you have done the father and son, if you act within twenty-four hours from this (ten o'clock, p. m.), and in but one way. I want money; I will, therefore, let my revenge rest, if you will accept my terms. Here they are:

"You will go to the Boyleston Street burial-ground to-morrow at two in the afternoon, and examining the vault, chamber No.—, and finding it empty (as you will), you are to go from there to the Stone Chapel (you will find it open), kneel at the tomb of your kinsman — Vassall, whose memory you are so reverent of, and repeat this oath aloud:

"I, Howard Bardell, do solemnly swear in this holy sanctuary, that I will pay to the person who reveals to me the body of Walter Walraven (unharméd, except from natural decay,) at the moment I look upon the said body, \$2,000 in gold. If I fail to so pay, may I inherit eternal misery.

"And I further swear, by the soul of my dead kinsman here entombed, that I will not betray, molest, or cause to be molested, betrayed, or imprisoned for taking, or concealing, or selling said body, any person or persons guilty of said offense, nor seek to discover who my guide to the place where the body is deposited is, or where such person goes after leaving me there; and if I violate this oath, may my said kinsman's soul be devoured by everlasting flames.'

"You will see no one near you, but your oath will be heard; and you will be seen. You will then proceed with the money (which you will get in the morning, of course,) at exactly eight o'clock, to the shaded lane in Brookline, called Still Street, turning toward the right from the road, and stopping half-way to the farther of two large chestnut trees on the left side of the street. There one will come to you, and will lead you to the spot. Ask nothing, make no attempt to learn anything, and all will be well. But, if all this is not performed to the letter, the body of Walter Walraven will, within one hour after eight o'clock to-morrow night, be covered with quick-lime, and consumed. Act accordingly."

The signature of James Crouch was boldly written

at the end of this astounding and strange document, and it bore the date of the day before.

For many minutes, the captain sat dumfounded. His face was blanched, his eyes dilated, the hand from which the letter had dropped was spread outward, with extended fingers, and he seemed shocked into insensibility.

Suddenly there was a revulsion. His gaze had wandered to the flushed face of the boy who lay sleeping at his feet. He sprang up, with a dismal groan, seized his hat from a table, and snatching the letter from the floor, rushed from the house.

No one had witnessed his departure; and the warm afternoon crept on toward sunset, the boy still slumbered on the crimson carpet, the house was silent. The sun set, redly vanishing behind the western woods, and shadows crept into the house.

Mrs. Peddie once more peered into the silent room, carrying a lamp, which she placed on a table.

"Body 'o me!" exclaimed she, observing her master's vacant chair, "it's his hour to su pan' he's gane frae the house—but he'll nae be far," murmured she, hastening to inform her mistress.

But, far or near, the captain came not, although the troubled eyes of his wife were a score of times at the street door, peering through the murk for the first glimpse of her absent lord.

Nine o'clock! The strokes of the clock sounded to Clara like human groans. Ten—and the front door was opened by some one from without.

"Thank heaven!" cried the anxious wife, hurrying

down from her room. But it was Ellen, who had obtained leave for an evening out, and was now wearily climbing the dark stairway to her own bedroom.

Mrs. Bardell briefly told the girl of the prolonged and unexplained absence of the captain, and received a sympathetic reply. Then she returned to her chamber, to pace it up and down as before, and to grow momentarily more distressed, and finally to become seriously alarmed.

Midnight—ah, that was his footstep, at last!

Clara had thrown herself upon her bed, exhausted, a few moments before she heard the door open again, and the sound of Mrs. Peddie's voice, raised to an unusual pitch. Flying down the staircase, she reached the foot before her husband had started to ascend. Her arms were stretched forth to clasp him—but she shrank back from him with a cry.

His appearance was startling. Face haggard and blanched, eyes holding in their sunken depths a stare of horror, his whole person stained with earth, as though he had fallen into a pit!

"What is it?" gasped his wife.

"Come upstairs," he answered, hoarsely, "and I will tell you."

CHAPTER XVII

THE ABDUCTION OF DANE WALRAVEN

In a fourth story room of the old Marlboro House on Washington Street, at the close of a rainy May day, two men sat at a table, conversing.

The night-shadows were gathering thickly about them, when a boy entered, bearing two funereal-looking candles, which he placed on the table. The dubious rays fell upon the uninviting countenances of two old acquaintances—Joel Thorp, and the ex-assistant superintendent of burial-grounds.

Joel held in his hand a crumpled copy of the "Patriot," from which he now began to read, interlarding the text with sundry peculiar expressions of his own:

"Lost! From his home, No.—, Tremont Street, about seven o'clock last evening, Dane Walraven, the ward of Captain Howard Bardell." (Here followed description.)

"\$1,000 reward will be paid by his guardian for the return of the boy to his home," etc.

"That's neat, Jemmy," observed Joel, laying down the paper, and lighting a pipe, which he proceeded to puff vigorously.

"Very," echoed his companion, who sat on the opposite side of the table, with folded hands, his usual attitude, half-sanctimonious, half-deliberative.

"Do ye think," queried Joel, between his whiffs, "that any cove'll find the kid, an' get the reward?"

The face of the other broadened with a sardonic smile.

"I don't think anybody will claim the reward," replied he, with his slow emphasis and sneering aspect, which always impressed his friend.

"An' *we* don't need it," chuckled Thorp, rattling some coins in his trousers pockets. "Fifteen hundred for yureself, an' five hundred for me. The job was a good un, an' the skipper done the 'andsome, Jemmy. 'E didn't wait long, eyether."

"I laid my plans for everything," responded the latter, complacently, "and," with sudden savageness, "if he hadn't played quick, the body'd have been eaten up, by —"

"An' ye think there's no danger of him huntin' ye up?"

"Don't you worry. He'll not hunt me up—he's too superstitious, believes in oaths, and a hereafter, like the rest of the fools."

"An' ye've left the offis?"

"Resigned," answered Crouch, sarcastically.

"Werry good. An' now, wot's next, Jemmy?" demanded Joel, who appeared to have tacitly permitted the other to lead.

"Nothing. In a short time, I'm going away, you know—with another."

"Ho, ho, yes, an' a wery interestin' party, eh, old cove?" chuckled Thorp, who seemed immensely amused.

"Of course. Is the girl to be depended on?"

"Same as me."

"Well, then, let's go home. If you hear anything drop, come and tell me; and I'll do the same with you. I'll be in Chelsea."

"Egad, that's the talk. So, as there's no more to be said to-night, an' no more corpses to move, I'll stump for home. The partner of my buzzum is *not* over-patient a-waiting, perticklerly w'en she expects noos."

"Where'd you pick her up?" inquired Crouch, contemptuously.

'On the wharves. She 'peared to be a proper wicious person, an' I rayther softened on her."

"I don't go much on women," observed the other, with his proverbial sniff.

"But Missus Thorp, the present, ain't a hordinary woman," argued Joel, spreading his crooked fingers on the table. "Missus Thorp 'as convictions, Jemmy."

"So has everybody," sneered his friend.

"No, Jemmy, no, sir," remonstrated Joel, warming, "they has i-dees; them's common. But Missus T. has somethink more walu'ble nor i-dees, she has convictions; an' I'll foller her convictions against all the i-dees in the wur-ruld."

"Women ain't safe to depend on, nohow," objected Crouch, rising to go; "'twas a woman made the first rumpus in the world, and it's a woman will make the last—if she has a mate."

"Well, I stan's by 'em," growled Joel, obstinately.

This was the one human trait, perhaps, which gave him a claim to human fellowship.

No response was given to this, except a sniff and swallow, and Joel shuffled out of the room.

"I'm goin' 'ome, Jemmy," said he, "good night."

But instead of going home, Joel went straight to the Bardell home, where he was admitted by the old housekeeper.

She recognized him at once.

"I dinna ken what ye're at, noo," she exclaimed, lapsing into her native provincialism.

"Oh, ye recollect me," growled he, pushing his way into the hall.

"Ay, you came here a week ago, and Mr. Bardell would not see you."

"Well, he'll see me now. Tell him I've summat to tell him about the boy's wanishin.'"

The eyes of the housekeeper sparkled in their deep sockets.

"About the chiel? Ah, he'll see the de'il himsel' for that!"

Catching the messenger by the hand, she dragged him into the parlor.

The captain was walking the floor; his face pale and careworn, his eyes bloodshot from sleeplessness and grief. He turned upon the visitor abruptly.

"What have you to tell me?" he demanded, almost savagely.

Joel advanced, with his hat in his hand.

"It ain't much," he replied, sullenly, "but it's a finger-mark. At seven of the clock last night, the lad was walkin' on Tremont Street with yure missus—"

"What!"

The captain sprang toward him with an energy that caused Joel to leap backward.

"I'm a-tellin' ye for yer own good," he grumbled, "an' there ain't no call to jump at me."

"But—what do you mean?" stammered the captain, staring angrily at his informant.

"I've said wot I mean; an' the captain of the watch will tell ye I ain't lyin'."

The captain strode to the door and called:

"Clara, come down for a moment."

The beautiful woman who had been a bride for but the length of a honeymoon, came tripping down the stairs, and swept into the presence of the wretch who had come there to wreck her happiness.

She glanced at the face of her husband; and when she saw the cloud that rested there like an unspoken threat, and the stern question that—not his compressed lips, but his impatient eyes—asked as they were bent upon her, she stopped, and the color left her cheeks.

"Repeat what you have just told me," he commanded, turning toward Thorp.

With a dogged manner, and with eyes downcast, the man obeyed.

Clara stared at him in amazement.

"Who is this man?" she demanded, turning to her husband.

"The man is of no consequence," returned he, impatiently. "You have heard what he said!"

Clara's eyes flashed indignantly.

"Did you see me with Dane, in Tremont Street?" she asked, with a scornful expression in her fair face.

"Yes, ma'am, in front of the big entrance to the common," answered he, looking up at her furtively, with his ogreish eye.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, ma'am." The tone was now malicious. He was tasting of revenge; and to such souls as his, the morsel was sweet. "An' the captain of the watch, he saw you, too!"

"Howard!"

The eyes of the young wife were turned full upon her husband with a wild, questioning look, as she crept slowly toward him. There was something in their expression now that would have startled him, had he looked.

But he did not see her; he was looking beyond her blanched face at another that peered in through the half-open door, the dark and handsome face of Ellen Peters.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FLIGHT OF A SUSPECTED WIFE

Clara had become so attached to Ellen Peters, previous to her marriage, that she had given the girl a home with her. The station assigned to her was less that of a servant than a lady's companion; and the ingenuous disposition of the young bride gave Ellen an opportunity at all times to know whatever she chose of her mistress and her movements. Apparently devoted to her service, the girl had gained her confidence absolutely, as well as the captain's. Both regarded her as a paragon of truthfulness.

On the evening of Dane's disappearance, Mrs. Bardell had eaten a very light supper, leaving her husband at the table. She had been within doors all day, she said, and felt the need of a little outdoor exercise.

"Will you have a drive?" inquired her husband, at all times willing to forego his own convenience for her benefit.

"No, I will walk a few blocks."

"Then let me go with you," he urged.

"No, you told me you wished to go to the store to-night, to look over your books," was her answer, and he had gone down to the wharf, leaving her as she ascended the stairs with Dane.

When Mr. Bardell returned late that night, he went

directly to bed, as no one was then astir in the house. The next morning, when he sat down to his breakfast, a few moments before his wife came down, he asked Ellen, who gave him his coffee, why Dane was not in his seat.

"He is usually the first at the table," he remarked.

"Oh," replied the girl, carelessly, "I suppose the poor little fellow was so tired when he went to bed, that he is sleeping it off."

"How is that?" inquired his guardian, somewhat puzzled.

"Why, I went on an errand for myself, last evening, about seven o'clock, and as I passed along Beacon Street mall, I saw Mrs. Bardell and Dane walking quite fast in the Common, and going toward Park Street. She had hold of his hand; and he appeared to drag along as though he was tired."

Ellen left the breakfast-room; and at that moment Mrs. Bardell entered.

"Where is Dane?" she asked.

"Still asleep," replied her husband, over his morning paper.

"That's odd. He is generally the first."

"You walked him too far, I am afraid."

But Mrs. Bardell raised her eyes in surprise.

"Where did I walk him to?" she asked.

Mr. Bardell repeated the information Ellen had just given him. But Clara looked bewildered.

"I don't understand," said she, "I left him in my room, when I went out; and when I returned he had gone to bed."

Ellen was now recalled, and further questioned. She stared at Mrs. Bardell in apparent amazement.

"Oh, Mrs. Bardell," cried she, with a shudder, "could it have been your ghost? That's a sure sign of death!"

"Nonsense," returned her mistress, impatiently.

"How far was the 'ghost' from you, Ellen?" queried the captain, amused at his wife's annoyed look.

"Oh, she was just passing the Pond."

"And you were—where?"

"At Beacon and Charles."

"Ah, too far off, and too many trees between you and the ghost, to identify it," was his playful summing up. "Well, call Dane, and let him give his account of it."

Ellen disappeared, but in a few moments came bounding into the breakfast-room, with a scared face.

"He is not there!" she articulated, hysterically, and sinking into a chair.

Simultaneously, husband and wife hurried up to Dane's little bedroom, and entered it. But they stopped at the threshold. There was no occupant of the dainty bed. Its blue silk coverlet and lace pillow shams were unrumpled, the arrangement of the chamber undisturbed. It seemed to the captain, as he stood there vacantly staring into it, as though his boy had been borne out of it dead, so dreary and desolate it looked without its smiling owner.

"My God, he is lost!" gasped he, tottering to a chair.

Within an hour, police and detectives were in mo-

tion in every part of the city, and out into the suburbs. The captain himself, driving hither and thither through the town, in his despair and grief, had spread the wretched news in every direction, and the story, meager as it was, had flown through highway and byway. Sympathetic crowds gathered about the crier, as with bell mournfully tolling, he went from corner to corner, repeating his doleful cry:

"Boy lost—"

But the day sped on, the night came lowering over the city, its intolerable blackness falling like a pall upon the soul of the haggard hunter who prowled the streets until morning, in the fruitless search for his darling.

Another day, and no tidings. Another night was far advanced; and woe still sat at the hearth of Howard Bardell. He had just come in from another long and exhausting drive through the north end of the city, when Joel Thorp was announced.

The statement Joel made to the captain came upon him like a thunderbolt. Instantly his mind reverted to the careless story told him the previous morning by Ellen Peters, before Dane's disappearance was known in the house. And now, as the sad face of the girl loomed in the doorway, he felt a horrible doubt creeping into his heart and chilling it as if a hand of ice had gripped it.

Maddened by this terrible suspicion, strengthened by the recollection of vague expressions of Ellen's about his wife's jealousy of his absorbing love for the boy, and by Clara's cheerfulness since Dane was lost,

(a cheerfulness which he had thought she was assuming in order to inspire him with hope,) he trembled in his knees, he shook as if in the midst of a whirlwind. There was, indeed, a whirlwind in the soul of this strong man, and it was rending him.

Every human mind is encompassed by doubts, and is perpetually speculating on the "maybe." Belief in the honesty and in the sincerity and affection of those who are dear to us is largely induced by the wish; but belief is a sentiment, and is easily shaken, however tenaciously the heart clings to it. And now, circumstance on circumstance was assailing Howard Bardell's belief in his wife, the being whom he had held next in reverence to his God. He doubted; and such doubt was to him a horror.

He beckoned to Ellen, and she slowly entered.

"Go to the city hall," said he hoarsely, "and ask the captain of the watch to come here in haste. Bring him with you."

Ellen made no reply, but, intently watching his pallid face for a moment, swiftly went forth upon her dubious mission.

The captain tottered, rather than walked, to a chair, and sank upon it, without turning his eyes toward his wife, or knowing that she stood there erect and rigid, her dilated eyes following him with looks of terror.

Joel had slunk into a corner of the parlor, near the window, where he peered out into the street.

The minutes crept on; the ticking of a clock in the hall was the only sound that broke the awful stillness. And neither of the three who waited for the coming

of the last witness of a desolated home stirred or seemed to breathe.

At last—after an eternity of waiting, an eternity of thought in a half-hour of time, there was an end. The captain of the watch strode into the room, and behind him glided Ellen.

In a voice preternaturally calm, but totally unrecognizable, the stricken man asked a single question; and his heart stood still while he waited for the answer.

With a glance of wonder at the singular group, the officer gave it:

"I saw Mrs. Bardell walking rapidly in the Common, skirting the Pond, and holding Dane by the hand. It was a few minutes after seven on the evening he disappeared."

Then a haggard face was lifted, a man rose slowly out of a chair, his tall form towered and swayed, his right arm was lifted as if to invoke the vengeance of Deity, his pale, drawn lips opened as if to utter a curse.

But the awful wail of a stricken woman rent the sullen and horrible silence, and froze the arm and the lips; the air stirred and parted before the rushing form that sped into the hall, out into the night, and was swallowed in an abyss of darkness.

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE TRACK OF THE KIDNAPERS

The pastor of the First Church was a methodical man. At precisely ten o'clock each night he retired to his chamber, read one or two favorite passages in his annotated Bible, and thus composed himself to enter those peaceful somnolic regions wherein it was his wont to remain for eight hours.

When, therefore, at eleven o'clock on the night of Clara Bardell's flight from her home, a spasmodic thundering at the front door knocker accompanied the strokes of the city bell, the sounds invaded the ministerial dreams, and wakened him with start.

Springing from his bed, he hastily drew on his velvet slippers and flowered dressing-gown, and hurried down, candle in hand, to the hall-door.

The old housekeeper of the Bardells stood on the steps without, trembling with excitement, and her gray head muffled in a plaid shawl.

"Oh, sir," cried she, in agitated tones, as the astonished minister peered into her pale face, "ye maun just come to Mr. Bardell, sir, at once! He's lying on the bed bemoaning, and wanting the dominie every minute. Ye'll come, sir?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Frothingham, with a troubled look, "but it appears rather strange that he should

have given way to his grief in that way, so long after the knowledge of his misfortune came to him."

"Oh, sir," returned Mrs. Peddie, forgetting in her distress and excitement that she had not informed him of the scene of an hour before, "it's belike madness, now, it's not grief at all, it's worse—but I maun go back to him; lord-a-mercy—"

And the poor body hurried off, moaning to herself, through the fog which somewhere hid the fleeing wife, while the minister returned to his chamber. In twenty minutes he was out in the street also, and made his way rapidly to the captain's residence. There he listened with amazement and sorrow to the terrible story poured into his ear by the bereaved husband, whose strong frame shook with the painful energy of an agony he could not suppress.

When all was told, and the benevolent heart of the listener had voiced its sorrow over this new calamity, he remained silent for awhile, gravely musing.

The captain watched his face with painful intense-ness, and at length asked in a hopeless voice:

"What now, since both are gone, is there for me? Nothing—nothing!"

And as the minister looked at him compassionately, he cried:

"Tell me what I am to do—what *can* I do?"

"Find *her*—first of all!"

The tone and look of the minister were stern, as he gave this brief counsel, which made it at once a rebuke and a command.

The haggard and pale cheeks of the captain flushed.

"The captain of the watch left here as soon as Clara disappeared from the door," he explained, "to follow her, and to send out patrols. I went with him, he going in one direction and I in another. She must have flown like the wind, for neither of us saw any trace of or heard any sound from her."

"And what became of the man—Thorp?"

"Ah!" The captain had forgotten Joel, had not given him a thought after the arrival of the officer. "He must have stolen away from the house," mused he.

"And the girl, Ellen Peters?"

"She was fearfully prostrated by the flight of her mistress; and she has gone in search of her also, declaring that she will never return here without her."

"It is a peculiar business," muttered Mr. Frothingham, his brows contracting. "But, let me advise you once for all, to drive out of your mind the cruel, and I believe unjust, suspicions you entertain toward your wife. She had no part in the abduction of the boy. It *was* an abduction, of course. The wretches who perpetrated the crime must be found and brought to punishment. In the meantime, you must keep such control over yourself as will enable you to direct, or at least to assist, in the search for both wife and the boy. I will come in to-morrow morning, and hope there will be good news."

But the morning brought no good news—nor news of any kind, except that Ellen Peters had not returned, and nothing had been heard of her. The police and detectives had found no trail; they had suspected

Crouch, and had tried to find him, but he had disappeared absolutely.

Within a week thereafter, the captain was lying unconscious in his chamber, stricken with brain fever, the usual and natural result of such an overwhelming experience as his. For nearly a month death sat at his bedside; and when he at length crept downstairs from his chamber, trembling, and bowed, and gaunt, his hair was white; a pale and touching emblem of the woe that had crowned his three brief months of marital joy.

One evening while he sat in his library, listlessly watching the scenes on the street, Mrs. Peddie announced a visitor.

"Ask him in here," directed the captain; and the next moment he was shaking hands with the new mayor of the city, Mr. Wells, who had been for some time a personal friend, and an occasional caller.

"I have come to have a little conversation with you, captain," said the mayor, cheerfully, "concerning your trouble."

"You are very kind," returned the host, almost apathetically.

"Oh, you will not feel so indifferent, I think, when I have told you that I believe the city marshal has a clew to the boy's abduction," exclaimed Mr. Wells, smilingly.

The captain became animated at once, his wan face lit up, and a tinge of color came into it as he asked with feverish eagerness:

"What is it? What can you tell me?"

"Let us be professional," began the mayor, in a brisk manner, "and let me ask you a few questions as a preliminary. You have two dangerous enemies in this city, have you not?"

"Enemies?" The captain reflected; but suddenly remembered. "Ah, yes, I believe I understand you. There are two persons whom I may consider enemies, I suppose, although without the slightest justification on their part."

"And their names?"

The captain gave the names of Thorp and Crouch, entering into a brief explanation of circumstances we already know.

"Precisely," was Mr. Wells' comment.

"Well, I believe there is no doubt that these two rascals were the abductors of Dane Walraven."

The captain again reflected. "I did suspect Crouch," observed he, "and we endeavored to find him, but failed; in fact, he has certainly left the city, which in itself is confirmatory evidence, in my opinion, that my suspicions were justified. But Thorp has never shown any disposition to annoy or injure me; in fact, he came here to give me—information—"

The captain's voice faltered here as the whole terrible scene in which Joel Thorp had figured rushed upon his recollection.

"Yes, I have heard something of his officious friendliness," remarked Mr. Wells, dryly. "And now, knowing from you and others something of his history, and the story of his coming here to make an indirect accusation against your wife, I am convinced that he is the man we want."

"But his place was visited, and a watch was set upon his house, and all to no purpose. I never thought anything would come of that, and nothing has."

"But something *will*," exclaimed the mayor, with sudden emphasis. "Now, I will tell you why I think so:

"The city marshal some months ago adopted a boy, whose name is Charles Vincent. This boy was employed by the baker who was burned to death, as was also his entire family, and his house consumed, at the corner of Broad and Hamilton. Here is the notice of the fire."

The mayor drew from his pocket an old copy of the Boston "Atlas," and read from it a paragraph reciting what has been previously stated, with a surmise that the fire was the work of an incendiary.

"Now," continued the mayor, "this boy was virtually kidnaped by Crouch, on the morning of the fatality to Murray the baker, and was virtually kept a prisoner in Thorp's house, until he ran away to the Boys' Asylum, which is a short distance from Thorp's place. He has just told the marshal a long story concerning his life at Murray's and at Thorp's; and the marshal states that the story lets in a startlingly clear light upon some of Thorp's transactions, and explains—gives a terrible meaning—to some of his utterances when quarreling with Murray on the night before the fire. One of the patrolmen overheard this quarrel, but he did not see or know Thorp's face, and paid little attention to the wrangle, only gossiping about it at the station, on hearing of the fire at Murray's.

There are some other incriminating circumstances, which it is not worth while repeating at this time, but which can be used against Thorp if we proceed as I am going to suggest we do. My suggestion is, that we arrest Thorp to-morrow morning, on a charge of larceny: nominal charge, yet a just one, since he in fact stole the clothing of the boy Vincent. The marshal is then to take the boy with him to the jail, and confront the prisoner, surprise him with certain statements the officer is prepared to make, and give him the option of showing where Dane is secreted, or standing a trial for arson. You are to supply the funds that may be found necessary to enable Thorp to leave the country, and the town will be relieved of the presence of a bad citizen."

"But would we not be morally, at least, compounding a felony?" asked the captain.

"No; the evidence is circumstantial, and slight in law, and a conviction of the crime of arson is a very remote possibility. What do you say, now?"

"Let us do as you propose, and may God speed us!"

The lethargic condition in which the long illness, as well as the hopelessness, of Captain Bardell had left him, had rapidly changed during this interview to one of feverish excitement; and his friend remained with him some minutes longer, in a kind endeavor to calm him.

After the mayor's departure, he went back to his chamber, sat down at a table, and resting his head upon his hands, strove to think; but a thousand wheels seemed whirling within his brain, and the very

awakening of hope made him tremble. From time to time a sigh escaped him, then a few muttered words; and in this attitude the gray morning found him.

CHAPTER XX

JOEL THORP IS BROUGHT TO BAY

The Boston jail, in Leverett Street, was a gloomy stone building with cannon-balls embedded in the blocks of stone, mortising them together, and rendering the walls practically impenetrable. Culprits shuddered when they approached its forbidding front, and once inside, they were willing to do heavy penance, to give almost any earnest of amendment, to shorten the term of their incarceration. They were not fed sumptuously, nor treated tenderly, nor indulged in the manner that in these days of ultra-humanitarianism is much in vogue. Crime was dealt with in a stern way, without making excuses to the criminal for his arrest and punishment, as is too often the case now, nor was the name of "crank" given to every human wolf who committed an extraordinary crime.

Three days after the visit of the mayor to Howard Bardell, the marshal, accompanied by Charlie, called at the jail and asked for the jailer, Mr. Badlam. This personage, a benevolent-faced man, as much liked by the "tame" prisoners as he was disliked by the incorrigibles, made his appearance, and begged his visitors to be seated.

The marshal, however, briefly mentioned his desire

to see a prisoner who had been brought in two days before.

"But there were two," was the smiling reply.

"No matter," observed the marshal, "the one I want to see is named Thorp."

"Well, marshal," returned the jailor, still smiling, "there were *two* Thorps run in, and they are both or either at your service, though I shouldn't fancy either of them."

The marshal looked surprised, and somewhat annoyed.

"I don't know but one Thorp," said he, "and he is a pawnbroker on Charter Street."

"Ah, then you wish to see the husband?"

"Who is the other?"

"The other is the wife, and there is a great deal of her," answered Mr. Badlam, significantly.

"Upon what charge was she taken?" inquired the marshal, uneasily.

"She resisted the arrest of her husband, and changed the countenance of the constable so completely that we didn't recognize him; so he brought her along, and has preferred a charge against her."

The marshal appeared relieved. After a moment's silence, he said:

"I will see both of them; the woman first."

Mr. Badlam shrugged his shoulders significantly, as he rose to show the way to the female quarters. "I suppose you've met with what they call 'Tartars,' in your business?" said he.

"Oh, yes," answered the marshal, with a laugh.

"Well, you're going to call on one now."

The marshal did not appear to be much disturbed by this unpromising outlook, but followed the jailer composedly, leaving the boy to wait his return.

Mrs. Thorp was in a solitary cell on the lower floor; her pugnacious disposition having re-asserted itself the moment she was placed among the other women, necessitating her immediate removal to "a room by herself," which she had from the first demanded, "because she 'ad an 'ome of her hown, an' lived private."

As the jailer approached with the marshal, she turned savagely toward them, and was about to indulge in some choice expletives, apparently, when she suddenly shrank back into a corner of the cell, and abruptly turned her back upon her visitors.

The marshal also, with a suppressed exclamation of surprise, had stopped suddenly.

"You are acquainted, eh?" remarked Mr. Badlam, amused at the woman's change of front.

"Yes," replied the other, with a crisp accent, "and if you will kindly leave us now, I'll renew the acquaintance."

The jailer nodded, and at once withdrew.

The marshal then tapped lightly on the door of the cell, and called out, in a confident tone:

"So you are here, Mrs. Ann—Mock!"

The woman turned toward him instantly.

"What do you want of me?" demanded she, defiantly.

"Why, you see, I am interested in you. I want to know, for instance, why you call yourself 'Mrs. Thorp,' when that isn't your name?"

Mrs. Thorp made no answer, contenting herself with a stony stare out of her greenish eyes.

"Perhaps you know that your other husband is in Weymouth?" suggested the marshal, ironically.

Still no answer, but a flash of defiance.

"And that you committed bigamy in marrying that precious pawnbroker?"

This shot had its effect. Mrs. Thorp came slowly forward, without removing her eyes from the placid countenance of the officer.

"And it was you, was it, that had me nabbed—for bigamy?" she asked, with an angry shudder.

"No. You know why you were nabbed. But you also know, I think, that if I should choose to do so, I could send you across to Charlestown prison."

"An' I s'pose ye would do it, eh?"

"Not if you show a disposition to mend things."

"Take care o' yer own morals, will ye!" snarled Mrs. Thorp, "an' don't preach to me, it's no use."

"Oh," retorted the imperturbable officer, "I'm not going to try to reform *your* morals by preaching to you. I'm going to influence you in a very different way."

"How'll ye do it?"

"By making you a proposition."

"Oh, ho! Then let's hear it, an' no more rat-hunting. I don't like much palaver, I don't."

"Very well. Now, stand close to the bars, here, and listen to everything I say to you. Maybe you'll have occasion to remember it afterwards. I will be obliged to whisper, since your two companions there appear to be such good listeners."

"Oh, you don't want them to hear, hey?" exclaimed Mrs. Thorp, with sudden animation. Then, with an unlooked-for spring toward the dividing bars, she thrust her sinewy hand through them, and caught a vixenish-looking woman by the throat; one of the two who had pressed close to their side of the cage in order to hear what the "row" was.

"Ye hussy!" screamed her assailant, choking her savagely, despite her struggles, "ef ye don't get back to yer corner an' stay there, I'll send ye where they all talks at oncet, and nobody listens! An' *you*—avast there," she shouted, releasing her prey with a push that sent her into a heap backward, and making a fierce movement at the other woman, who had already retreated. "Now," she said, turning to the marshal, who had looked on with perfect equanimity, "spin yer yarn, an' be lively."

The marshal promptly began his yarn, speaking in whispers, to which the woman listened intently, responding from time to time with nods, curses, ejaculations, and long, mumbled sentences, which evidently pleased the officer. When the conversation was finished, she said aloud:

"We're pardners. I'll do it!"

CHAPTER XXI

DANE WALRAVEN RESTORED

When the marshal returned to the jailer's parlor, he requested that functionary to escort him to Joel's "headquarters."

Mr. Badlam accordingly led the way into the interior of the jail, where, in a large and bare room, some twenty men were busily picking oakum, an occupation at which the prisoners worked on inclement days, instead of breaking stone on the streets.

The jailer stopped there.

"Joel Thorp, come here."

This summons caused every one to lift his head and stare at the jailer inquisitively; but, as speech was forbidden, they indulged in pantomime and grimace, as Joel lurched forward, his eye fixed with a sidelong glance at the marshal, whom he appeared to regard with some uneasiness.

"Here is your man, marshal," said the jailer, as he turned to go, "you can take him into the corridor, if you like."

"That is better, I think. Send the person whom I left in your room in the corridor, to me, and tell him to keep out of the view of this man until I give him a signal to show himself," whispered the marshal.

The jailer nodded and disappeared, while the officer

conducted his reluctant prisoner into the long passage. Stopping there, he said abruptly:

"Thorp, do you want to get out of here very badly—to go free?"

The man laughed jeeringly.

"This 'ere's not a place to fall in love with, do ye think?"

"It is a comfortable place, not to say cheerful, to what you are likely to get into before long."

"Come!" growled Thorp, with a startled look, "wot d'ye mean?"

"I say you are in a bad boat."

Joel glared sullenly at his visitor, but held his peace.

"Do you remember the banker—Walter Walraven?"

The question was asked abruptly, and its effect upon the prisoner was startling. He gave a hoarse cry, and staggered against the wall, where he leaned tremblingly, his one hideous eye glowing defiantly, as he waited for what was to come. Evidently, what came was not what he expected; for he gave a snort of derision when the marshal said:

"You stole his body, you and your accomplice, Jem Crouch, and sold it to the dead man's friend!"

"Is that wot yer after?" sneered Joel.

The marshal only eyed him complacently, rubbing his hands softly together, as if meditating.

"You have a daughter, Martha," continued he, speaking slowly.

"And a son," suggested Joel, with condescension. He was beginning to feel in extremely good humor; but it was very short-lived.

"Your daughter went under the name of—Ellen Peters!"

"Wot?"

Joel began to tremble anew, and the look of dread returned to his face.

"This girl of yours, calling herself Ellen Peters, wormed herself into the confidence of Mrs. Bardell, and was taken into service by that unfortunate lady. One evening Ellen—that is to say, your daughter Martha—acting under the instructions of yourself and Jem Crouch, dressed herself in the clothing of Mrs. Bardell, and took the captain's little ward, Dane Walraven, out for a walk, telling him she was going out in that costume to fool a sweetheart, and he was to go with her and see the fun."

"That's a lie!" vociferated Thorp fiercely.

"Your daughter then took the boy into the Common, and went with him to the marshes, where Jem Crouch lurked, and delivered the child to him. Jem Crouch then seized the boy by the throat, tied a handkerchief over his mouth, threw a coffee-bag over his head, threatening him with death if he kicked or made any movement, and carried him north by the route of Charles, Cambridge, Causeway, and Lynn Streets into No. 43 Charter Street, where you kept him hidden until the next morning. By the first boat that crossed the Winisimet Ferry, Jem Crouch carried the boy to Chelsea, and up on Powder Horn Hill, where he had a den. Martha was there, and received the boy—"

"Stop!" shouted Joel, who had been listening for the last few moments, with growing excitement, which

had now become a frenzy. He himself was obliged to stop after issuing his command, in order to breathe, so agitated had he become.

"Well?" inquired the marshal.

"W'ere—did—ye get—them lies?"

"From your—from Ann Mock!"

Joel's legs gave way, and he fell in a collapsed heap upon the grimy floor, where he proceeded to go through sundry performances of a most astonishing and energetic character, thumping his bushy head against the hard boards, striking them with his fists, and calling down innumerable curses upon his betrayer.

The marshal watched this ebullition with urbane indifference. When Joel had exhausted himself, however, and was pausing for breath, his tormentor said, authoritatively:

"Get up; I have more to tell you!"

With a sudden return of the fear which his rage had for the time nearly banished, Joel sullenly obeyed.

"Do you remember a baker named Murray?"

"Curse ye!" yelled the desperate culprit, clawing at the air, while he glared at his accuser.

"You remember him. Well, on the night of May 4, last, you quarreled with him about a bill you owed him for bread and pastry, and you told him you would ruin him before another night had passed. You did ruin him, by burning his house while he and his family lay sleeping in it, and they were burned to death."

A glance of terror shot from the steel-blue eye, the claw-like hands clutched at the sinewy throat, then dropped helplessly. But suddenly he rallied.

"Ye can't prove anythink on me," said he.

"Charlie!" called the marshal.

Joel turned quickly in the direction of the marshal's glance, and as he saw the boy approaching, he uttered a hoarse "Great Lord!" and staggered against the wall. His broad chest heaved, his single eye glared upon this last witness of his crimes, and froth oozed from his closed lips.

"This is the boy you took from the baker."

With a groan, the wretch closed his eye, but made no response. Fear had, for the first time in his miserable career, vanquished Joel Thorp.

"So you see," pursued the marshal, "your criminal record is a black one and your career in this country, at least, is about to close. You can be imprisoned for life to a certainty; and perhaps you can be hung."

"Wot do ye want of me?" demanded Thorp, sinking his voice to a husky whisper.

"I want you to tell me where Dane Walraven now is. Ann Mock says he is no longer in Chelsea. She knows nothing now of his whereabouts. If she did, I should not have come here to you, but would have left you to pay the penalty of your crimes."

"An' if I tell you where the kid is—wot's in for me?"

"Wait. I want you to tell me, also, where Jem Crouch and your daughter are."

"Oh," exclaimed the prisoner, exultantly, "I don't object to tellin' that without no bargain. Jem an' Marthy's gone to England."

"Well, the lad? Where is he?"

"I say wot I said first—wot's in for me, if I tell where the kid is—curse him?"

"Freedom to return to England. That is, you will be *sent* to England, and you are never to return to this country."

"An' how can ye get me out of this?" demanded Joel, suspiciously.

"There are but four persons who know of the crimes you have committed here. They are Captain Bardell and his friends. You will be called up for trial, and no evidence will be forthcoming, so you will be acquitted; that is, you will be discharged. You will then go with me to the place where you hold Dane Walraven in concealment; and if we find him safe and unharmed, you will then be put on board the Petrel, which sails for Liverpool day after to-morrow, and your passage paid."

"Wery good, it's a go. I'll give up the kid—curse 'im. But," he muttered, under his breath, "it ain't all over yet. There's scores to pay, an' by—they'll be paid!"

But the marshal had performed his mission, and with a nod, had turned away, taking Charlie with him, and leaving Joel moodily staring at the floor.

As the latter crept back to his work, he drew his bushy black brows into a scowl, and hissed:

"Sile an' me—we'll follow 'em—to the death!"

CHAPTER XXII

FOUND—A WIFE AND DAUGHTER!

June roses were blooming, June skies were glowing, and the waters of Boston Harbor were dancing in the golden noonday.

One year had gone since Dane Walraven's return to his guardian's roof. The boy had been restored with a black head and a brown skin; but the vigorous scrubbing both received at the hands of Mrs. Peddie, who stopped a score of times in the midst of her delightful task to bestow Scotch kisses upon the "puir bairn," had removed every trace of stain and dye; and except for the yellow locks, which had been shorn by his abductors, Dane was the same bonny lad as before his strange experience.

The year that had passed since then had given the boy an inch in height, and deepened the color in his cheeks, delighting his guardian with these and other indications of a vigorous youth, and calling from Mrs. Peddie the frequent asseveration that —

"The laddie has the Howard strain, and a braw race it is; but there's the spoiling of a Hieland chief in the chiel."

The captain had purchased a handsome little cat-rigged yacht, which he was desirous of trying, and on this June day he started with Dane on a sail to New

York. The boat moved like a swallow, never heeling except when fronting a swell; and after a smooth sail, they arrived at the metropolis, and tied up in East River.

On the third day after their arrival, which was the Sabbath, they attended Trinity Church service. Seats were given them just inside the middle aisle to the left of the center of the nave, the captain having the end seat.

While the congregation was slowly settling into place, the eyes of Captain Bardell wandered over to the pew opposite his own, and rested dreamily upon its occupant, a lady dressed in black, who had just entered, and was kneeling at the moment in prayer. Her figure was that of a young woman, elegant and graceful; and her head, bent reverently forward, gave a profile of exquisite contour, while the face, singularly pale, but of flawless complexion, bore an expression of profound melancholy. Her attitude and pose, indeed, suggested a resignation at once dignified and pathetic, and as the captain's eyes dwelt upon her with the sad and yearning gaze which had never left them since the night of his wife's flight, something within him began to stir; and his unconscious interest in the unknown grew in intensity until it verged upon excitement.

Ending her brief devotions, the lady slowly seated herself, and sat quietly facing the minister, who immediately began his discourse.

The sermon was an able one, but Captain Bardell's gaze was glued to the face of the fair worshiper, nor

did he remove it for an instant during the whole of the service.

As the congregation rose to leave the church, he stood waiting in the aisle until the lady passed out of her pew, and in doing so her face was turned toward him. Their eyes met for an instant; she moved forward with a trance-like expression, and they stood face to face.

"Clara!"

As that was the sweetest word the captain had ever known, it naturally was the first he uttered—the name of one he had held to his bosom as a bride, as a wife.

She did not answer; but he caught her hand, drew her along through the crowded aisle, out into the smiling sunlight, and away from the throng. She went passively with him, pale as a moonbeam in mid-winter, rigid as an ice-pinnacle floating in a polar sea, and as cold.

Dane had followed closely; and now he seized her other hand, which hung cold and lifelessly at her side, and cried excitedly:

"Oh, we have found you! We have found you!"

The boy's lips were pressed again and again upon the unresponding fingers, while tears of joy from his blue eyes rained upon them.

"Clara, speak!"

It was the captain's voice, the voice of her husband, husky, faint, and pleading.

After the first lightning glance of recognition, she had not looked at him. Now, as she heard the low and tremulous tones appealing to her, and knew there

was a prayer for forgiveness in them, she raised her dark eyes to his face, and searched its lineaments. She saw the lines of trouble there, and the white crown of sorrow that wreathed his noble head; and all the generous impulses of her nature clamored for his pardon. Then she gave it—in one word that trembled from her sweet lips like the silver note of a flute—

"Howard!"

Ah, how he yearned at that moment of re-union to clasp her—his restored wife—in his arms! But they were in the great thoroughfare of Broadway; there were thousands of eyes about them, and their joy was sacred, they must wait.

"Where shall we go?" he whispered.

"To my home, of course," she murmured.

Her home! It sounded like a humiliation to him. She had but one home, the home she had abandoned—no, the home his false and cruel suspicion had thrust her from. But she was restored to him, and there was to be no more separation, no more sorrow. His heart leaped within him at that thought.

Clara led the way up Broadway, and out into the suburbs, stopping at a plain brick house with a tiled roof, in what is now Bond Street.

"And you live here?" queried her husband, the tears welling into his eyes as he looked up at the quaint little windows, curtained with dimity.

"Yes," answered Clara pensively, as they plied the knocker, "I am a teacher in the public schools, and I have rooms with a genteel family here—Tot and I."

"Tot? Who is that?"

"You will see her in a moment," replied his wife, with a demure smile.

A little colored girl opened the door, and they entered the hall.

"Bring Tot in, Isabel," Mrs. Bardell directed, as she led her husband and Dane into the modest parlor.

A crowing laugh came from the rear of the hall at that moment, and the girl entered, carrying in her arms a smiling little one, clad in the daintiest of dresses, bearing an absolutely perfect resemblance to—Captain Bardell's wife!

"Your daughter, Howard," was the introduction his wife gave him to the little stranger.

"My—daughter!" gasped the astonished captain, for a moment overcome.

Needless is it to dwell upon the bewilderment, the ecstasy of the bronzed skipper and father. He held the little beauty in his arms, now close to his breast, now at arm's length; then he set the prodigy on the carpet, and stood off to see it topple and fall over, laughing, exclaiming, caressing it for full a half hour.

"Silly man!" murmured the wife, who sat in the shadow of the small room, that she might not betray the equally silly fact that she was crying.

The antics of Dane added zest to these performances. He capered about the crowing wonder with wild delight.

"What's its name?" he demanded, abruptly pausing.

"Eleanor, dear," returned the mother.

"Just to think of it, Guardy," cried he, down on all fours before it, "it's a girl!"

"Don't you wish it was a boy?" asked the mother, smilingly.

"No," loftily, "boys can take care of themselves."

"And who will take care of Tot?"

"Me!"

And Dane was on his sturdy little legs, posing like a diminutive knight.

Ah, if he had always remembered his promise!

It was late that night when Captain Bardell left his wife, and returned to his hotel. Dane remained with Clara, insisting on sleeping beside the diminutive mistress of his destiny.

On the following morning three of the happiest people in New York went to call upon the gray-haired principal of the school in which Clara taught. She had frankly told him her story when she had made her application for a department, and his influence had done much for her. He was prepared for the *denouement*, and sent her away with her husband, with a fatherly blessing.

The trip back to Boston was performed without a single incident to mar the happiness that pervaded the little craft; and when they reached home—the home which had been so long desolate—Mrs. Peddie had her full share of surprise, wonder, and delight. Dane explained to the good dame that "Tot" was to be his especial charge.

"Aweel," she observed, looking down into his blue eyes, "it's the lassies that will make or mar ye, bairn!"

And once more had the Scotch housekeeper spoken like an oracle.

CHAPTER XXIII

DOCTOR TOM PELHAM

Nineteen years of unbroken happiness had succeeded the reunion of the Bardell family. The house in Tremont Street had become a familiar number to the young society people of the south end; and it was heartily conceded that it contained as interesting a quartette as any home in Boston.

Captain Bardell was now a man of fifty-four; but apparently in perfect physical and mental vigor, and by no means near the end of his active career. Clara had become somewhat thinner and paler than seemed consistent with good health; but her unvaryingly cheerful spirits contradicted any suspicion that her appearance should be charged to illness. The young people had grown into splendid types of manhood and womanhood. Dane's blonde beauty contrasted strikingly well with Eleanor's brunette loveliness. His form had expanded and lengthened until now he stood nearly six feet in height, but faultlessly proportioned, and without a suspicion of heaviness in either gait or gesture. The same blonde hair, blue eyes, and peach-like complexion drew admiring glances from women and wondering stares from men, although he was now in his twenty-seventh year. He had graduated at Harvard, had spent three years in Europe, and had re-

turned to his home a brilliant, accomplished and polished man.

Nor had nature been less prodigal with Eleanor, who had developed into a superb beauty of twenty, resembling her mother in every feature, as she did in her firm and amiable character; but in physical development she surpassed her mother. With a figure large and commanding, an air imperial as Juno's, a brow as classic as Diana's, these, with her intellectual attributes, made her, young as she was, a social leader. Her nature was peculiarly sensitive and proud, even to morbidness. This trait may have been attributable to the unhappy circumstances attending and surrounding her birth, and indeed that was the explanation given it tacitly, by both her parents. To a more prescient eye than theirs she would have suggested a nature doomed to suffer—as she was destined to—from the faults, the sins of others.

Eleanor had been sent to a noted seminary; and while there, she had imbibed certain ideas of the supernatural in life, which we shall hereafter have occasion to mention at length; and after her return as a graduate, she had continued her mysterious studies until they acquired a mastery over her reason.

Nothing, during the years succeeding the recovery of Dane and the return of Clara, had been seen or heard of the malignant enemies who had caused them so many sorrows, and well-nigh wrecked their lives. Joel Thorp had been "transported" in effect, to England, and dared not return to America.

His spouse had settled in Marblehead with her re-

pentant husband, while Jem Crouch and Martha had also crossed the sea, after a hasty marriage before a civil official in New York. Silas had never been seen by the Bardells since the burning of the *Armadillo*. The whole dangerous brood had long since been forgotten, except as hideous memories which the survivors of their infamous plots strove to banish, and to which they never referred.

They were yet to realize that the reptiles were only dormant, and were yet to strike twice at their lives, their honor, and their domestic peace.

Dane and Eleanor had long been taught to look forward to a union with each other; and as there had never been any compulsory suggestion offered them, they were quite willing to marry, and were now betrothed. Arrangements were, indeed, already in progress for the celebration of their nuptials at Christmas-tide, in an elaborate and imposing manner. The wealth inherited by Dane from his unfortunate father had accumulated so steadily, that it now amounted to not less than two hundred thousand dollars, a princely fortune at that date for a young man. But, besides this patrimony, the captain had amassed a considerable fortune, and Eleanor was the only one to inherit it. Thus, with fortune, health, physical beauty and social prestige, there really seemed to be in store for these favored children nothing save happiness, unbroken and prolonged.

But when have human calculations provided against "possibility?" There are two pigmy words—pigmies that have the terrible attributes of giants—constantly

overlooked in human calculations, and as constantly looming up in front of the calculators to disappoint, to balk, or to defeat them: "If," and "But." In future pages of this history these two words are talismanic, they stand beyond like two grim mountains, directly in the path of our darlings and only too soon will their unconscious feet lead to them.

It was now the midsummer, and a great number of people in the city were prostrated by sickness. Among the various disorders that prevailed, several cases of malignant small-pox had been reported to the city physicians; but the most serious was an insidious disease, known in modern medical nomenclature as "tuberculosis." It had been for several months making sad ravages among the lower and poorer classes in the city, attracting the special attention of the professors in the medical college in Mason Street; and the lecturers in debate had sent some of their theses to the newspapers. Other physicians followed with press articles, and a spirited controversy began. One of these articles, headed "Theories of the Youngest Physician in Boston," appeared one morning in the "Transcript;" and when Captain Bardell came down to his breakfast he found his favorite paper lying moist and inviting beside his plate, with the above head-lines beckoning his attention. He read the first paragraph aloud:

"The distinct product of mal-assimilation is *tubercle*.

* * * Calcarea and iodine should be depended upon as remedial and restorative agents; calcarea being especially demanded when innutrition is caused entirely by functional derangement. Diet and hygienic aids, also, must not be neglected."

"There," observed the captain, laying down his paper, and leisurely wiping his glasses, "I call that a bold presentation, a—a—fine diathesis—of this devilish malady. This doctor knows what he's talking about." (It is doubtful if the captain did.) "He's a neighbor, too, Clara."

"Indeed?" nodded Clara, sipping her coffee, and smiling in it.

"Egad, yes. Came here from New York, I understand, and has taken an office four doors from here—front rooms. I've seen him on the street twice."

"Did he offer to vaccinate you, papa mine?" laughed Eleanor, who had just had her own experience.

"Vaccinate me! Why, Tot, I've been on board ship with five cases below deck, and—but people are much more sensitive to disease in these effeminate days."

"Is the doctor nice?" inquired his daughter, slyly glancing at Dane.

"Ha, ha, you minx! I'll go and find out. Yes, I'll call on him this morning, and have a bit of a chat with him."

The call was made, and the captain came back to report to his wife.

"He's the cleverest young man I ever met," was his verdict. "Only twenty-eight, but brimful of—of therapeutics, pharmacy, and—ah, science. Good-looking, and gentlemanly, too. And, egad, Clara, I asked him to come and dine with us next Sunday."

Mrs. Bardell smiled. She never found fault with her husband's social eccentricities; and his impromptu invitations never raised a storm at home.

"What is his name?" she asked.

"Dr. Tom Pelham," answered the captain briskly; "a good name, too, my dear, a very respectable name—English. You'll like him."

Doctor Pelham came to the Sunday dinner, and comported himself so well that he received another invitation for the Sunday following, which he graciously accepted. Then the captain discovered that his new acquaintance played whist; so, it came to pass that the doctor spent every Wednesday and Saturday evening thereafter at the Bardell whist table; and within a month, the two, despite the long bridge between them in the matter of age, were professed cronies.

From this social relation it was but a step to the professional; and the step—irretrievable, terrible in its consequences—was soon to be taken.

CHAPTER XXIV

CAPTAIN BARDELL PLAYS NO MORE WHIST

“Now for our game!
We must be foxes, velvet-pawed
And wary.” —*The Conspirators.*

One morning Doctor Pelham was called in to see Captain Bardell, whom he found still in bed, although it was past ten o'clock.

“No whist to-night, I'm afraid!” he exclaimed, looking ruefully out from a mass of quilts, with very red eyes.

“What is it, my dear sir?” inquired the physician, with an air of solicitude, as he approached the great four-post bedstead.

“Why—confound it—night before last, half an hour after you left here, I was taken with a congestive chill,” explained the patient, speaking with some difficulty. “I got over it, but have felt very queer ever since. I've a strange numbness in my head and limbs, and have kept mewed in my room, in consequence. First time in my life, sir! Never sick before; but I had a curiosity to know how people feel when they're sick—ugh!—and my curiosity is more than gratified—ugh!”

The patient drew himself together suddenly, as if he experienced a sharp twinge.

"Where is the pain now?" asked the doctor.

"Pains, you mean; all over," groaned he. "I found I couldn't walk this morning, except like a hobble-de-hoy; so I took Mrs. Bardell's advice, and—here I am, as the oyster said when the crab looked into his shell."

"Ah, if you are not too sick to joke, we'll soon be at the whist table again," smiled the doctor.

"Don't know about that; my tongue's covered with barnacles, and I'm on my beam-end—ugh!"

"Well, I will look at your tongue. Aha, furry. Now, your eyes—umph, bad! By the by, you told me the other night that your daily walks extend from seven to ten miles?"

"Yes, in fair weather. That's the way I keep myself supple," returned the captain, complacently.

"Umph. And you have frequently come home very tired, of course?"

"Yes, sometimes," was the reluctant admission. The captain had his weaknesses. But a man without a weakness would not be a lovable man, and he was a charming one.

"Had a fall—lately?"

"Egad, yes!" with some surprise, since he had heard no one laugh, and had told no one about it.

"Slipped on the sidewalk, maybe, and got a bad knock, or—"

"Why, confound it, I did slip and fall last week—in my warehouse, and got a rough reception from the floor, but no one saw it."

"On the head?"

"Head and shoulder; quite a shaking up; I weigh one hundred and ninety, now."

"Any nausea?"

"Twice; worse than a sea-sick land-lubbe's connipation!" with disgust.

"Haven't slept well, skin hot, wanted to be always moving about, eh?" continued the doctor, thrusting his white hands in his trousers pockets, and partly closing his eyes.

"Come, ease off, doctor!" expostulated the patient; "great whales! you must have gotten a looking-glass inside of me! You've made a good, a deuced good—er—ah—"

"Diagnosis and—" prompted the doctor.

"What? No, egad, I said you have made a deuced good diagnosis," growled the captain, whose sensitiveness brooked no exposure of his unfamiliarity with medical terms.

"Yes, I think I have," assented Doctor Pelham, drumming abstractedly on the back of a chair.

For a few moments there was nothing heard in the room save the stertorous breathing of the patient. Then the doctor turned, with a sudden, swinging movement, toward the bed.

"Well, my dear friend," said he, "you will not take any more long walks."

"Order number one," groaned the sufferer; "go on."

"I shall have to put you in training for a long course of treatment—

"What?"

The captain fairly bounced in his bed.

"Oh," puffing indignantly, "then I am to be cat-hauled and keel-hauled, eh?"

"Treatment, dietetic and—"

"Wait a bit," shouted the skipper, propping himself on his pillows, with an effort. "Order number two—milk-and-water, spoon-food—go on, sir!" with stern reproach in his fine eyes.

"How old are you, captain?" queried the physician, meditatively.

"A boy, sir, a mere boy," responded he, irritably. Was he going to be told next that he must don flannels and night-caps! Egad, he would repudiate order number three.

But the doctor did not seem to threaten such an indignity, nor even to expect or need an answer to his question, for, in the same abstracted tone, he answered the question himself—"Fifty-four—" and then abruptly stopped, stared, and glanced quickly at the patient. Indeed, his manner for the past five minutes had been odd, not to say moody. His mind appeared to be wandering very far from his body.

The captain manifested surprise again. "Who told you I am fifty-four? I don't deny it, though; that's nothing. My father's father died at ninety."

"Yes, a splendid old oak—and looked like one—"

"What? What do you know about him? Did you ever see him?" demanded the captain, opening his reddened eyes very widely.

"H'm—I? Oh, certainly not. Of course not."

Doctor Pelham seemed to "jerk" himself together with an angry effort. He walked to a window, and back to the bed, as if to waken his faculties out of a sleep.

"Well," resumed the patient, "you've told me enough to bother me, now go on and give me the whole dose."

"Unpleasant, isn't it?" remarked the doctor, placidly.

"Deucedly so. But—what is the matter with me?"

"There are grave symptoms of meningitis, my poor friend."

"You don't tell me!"

"Involving the dura mater and cranial arachnoid."

"The devil, you say!"

The ex-skipper had not the slightest conception of the doctor's meaning; but when he had used those wonderful nautical phrases on board ship, he had felt a mild contempt for the gaping land-lubbers who listened with such reverence and bewilderment; and he would not for a moment show his own ignorance of this other craft, strange as it was to him. However, whatever the doctor meant, his words implied something serious, so his face became grave. Then, savagely:

"Well, well, what is the treatment you propose?"

"I shall use aconite and belladonna, and—primarily—arnica as a prophylactic; and I shall prescribe a regimen of diet to-morrow."

"And coop me up in the hold—under hatches—quarantined—in hock—b-r-r—"

The captain's fuming was stifled under the bed-clothes, which he drew viciously over his head, as if to end the vexatious interview.

Doctor Pelham glanced at the heap on the bed, smiled singularly, and softly opened the door.

As he closed it gently behind him, the captain thrust

his head out of a mountain of quilts, and shouted after him:

"Bring in your hospital stores, and come on—and be d—d to you!"

CHAPTER XXV

A DEATH-BED WARNING—"BEWARE OF HIM"

Doctor Pelham had reached the front door, when the door of the library opened, and Mrs. Bardell stood on the threshold. She was looking even paler than usual, and her manner betrayed anxiety.

"Ah, madam," exclaimed the young physician, lifting his hat gracefully, as he held it in his hand, "my poor friend up there is about to see me more frequently than ever, but not at the whist-table, where he always won the odd game."

"Is it anything more than a cold?" asked she, disturbed by his manner.

"It is something quite different," replied he, gravely; and then he proceeded to tell her, in a soothing voice, of the real malady, and the treatment that was imperative in the case.

Mrs. Bardell listened to the low tones of the physician with growing apprehension. Her face clouded, a gray tint crept into it, and she became momentarily more agitated.

"It is, then, a very serious matter?" she asked, faintly.

"I must confess, madam, that the symptoms are serious; but we must not lose courage. Between myself and you, he cannot lack care."

"Ah—you are to be his physician then?"

Doctor Pelham bowed. There was something like irony in his voice, as he answered:

"Yes, madam, I shall have that sad privilege;" and with a final movement of his head, he left her.

Mrs. Bardell looked wistfully after him until the hall-door closed. Her eyes bore a troubled expression, and there was a slight frown on her face, as she went up the stairs to her husband's room. She had never felt anything but indifference toward the physician until now. But at this moment, for some reason unaccountable to herself, she experienced a shock; and discovered that what she had supposed was indifference, was in reality a settled antipathy.

"Hillo, Clara!" exclaimed the captain, as she entered his room, "did you see Pelham before he went off?"

"Yes, dear," replied she, taking a seat by the bed. "And he tells me that you are to have only himself. Do you not think it would be more prudent to call in an older physician, one we are better acquainted with?"

"Tut! The old school is going out; there's a new order of things. Pelham is progressive; and besides, he's a man of ideas; and as for knowing any one better, why, I know him through and through. He's awfully transparent—like most men of genius, actually stupid, outside of his profession. No, my love, I'll keep Tom at the helm, and weather it—ugh!"

But the captain grew rapidly worse. In three weeks he was woefully changed in appearance; in five, he was apparently on the verge of dementia; then fol-

lowed almost constant stupor; and when the first October tints clothed the trees in gala-dress, he was borne under them by a grieving multitude; and Doctor Tom Pelham led them.

For some months previous to this terrible bereavement, Clara's health had been steadily declining; during the latter part of her husband's illness she had sacrificed it by constant attendance upon him; and finally, when she felt his hand growing cold in hers; and watched the shadow stealing over his wasted face, her fortitude itself gave way. She went from his funeral to her death-bed.

Mrs. Peddie, who was now too old to be of any service, and who had been retained only as a supernumerary, because of her past faithful services, exhibited the most grotesque anger when the quondam friend of her mistress, the Widow Farnsworth, was sent for to nurse the invalid. But the cheerful, and still plump little widow, proved, ere a week of her ministrations had passed, that she was indispensable, notwithstanding Eleanor's untiring and earnest devotion at her mother's bedside, supplemented by the tenderness of Dane, who read to her, waited at her door for messages, and spent nights of sleeplessness, that he might be at hand if he was needed in the sick-room.

A few days before the end came, something extraordinary occurred in Clara's chamber. A stranger had appeared at the front door one morning at an early hour, and demanded to see Mrs. Bardell. Mrs. Farnsworth answered his summons, and explained that Mrs. Bardell was lying dangerously ill, and any message

should be left with herself. The man hesitated, but at length drew from a pocket a packet, which he delivered to the widow, sternly enjoining her to deliver it into Clara's hands without delay, as its contents were of grave interest to her. It was very securely tied in a thick wrapper of brown paper, and the name—Mrs. Howard Bardell—and the word—Important—were boldly written on the outside.

Mrs. Farnsworth carried the packet into the sick-room, telling Mrs. Bardell not to open it until she grew better, since it was most probably a business matter, and she was in no condition to attend to business, etc.

But of course the packet was opened, the contents inspected, read, and then—!

There came from Mrs. Bardell's chamber shriek after shriek, succeeded by groan after groan—then silence, as if some fell sorrow, some indescribable horror had invaded it, ending in death or a swoon!

Mrs. Farnsworth had come forth from the room, after a time, with a white and horror-stricken face, and eyes in which terror seemed to have taken lodgment for all after time, and summoned a servant, whom she sent to bring the doctor. No one was in the house except this one servant, the widow, and Mrs. Bardell, and the latter divulged nothing of what had transpired behind the closed door. It remained a mystery for days afterward; but it hastened Clara Bardell's death, which was now very near at hand.

In her last hour she requested to be left alone with Dane and Eleanor, to whom she wished to impart her

last thoughts, to give her last commands, as they knelt in mourning garb at her bedside.

In a slow half-whisper, with her blue-veined hands resting lovingly upon them, she told them her wishes. They were to be married a month after her death, and Eleanor was to wear the wedding-ring upon her own finger, a splendid gem which had been in the captain's family for generations.

"Six brides have worn it," she whispered, taking it off and putting it in Dane's trembling hand, "and it once belonged to Queen Mary of Scotland. May your life, my darling, be as full of sunshine as hers was full of clouds and storm."

After that, she lay back upon her pillow for awhile, breathing faintly at first, as though exhausted. But the grieving eyes that watched her face, saw a change coming into it, a change that frightened them. It was not the look of a dying person, but a look of horror, growing in intensity, driving back, by its very energy, the specter that crept toward her. She strove to put down the tumult that surged within her, to become calm, that she might communicate the strange thoughts which would reveal something to them. At last she succeeded; and turning toward the silent watchers, she beckoned them to lean closer to her pillow.

Death was very near, when she uttered her final words—terrible words—and she never finished them.

"Dane," she whispered, hurriedly, looking into his eyes with an awful expression in her own, "you have become much attached to—to Doctor Pelham—I believe?"

The fair head bowed assent; he was too full of anguish to trust his voice.

The dying woman raised herself upon her elbow by a last supernal effort; her breath now came in quick and painful gasps, her eyes, sunken and glittering with a supreme light, glanced like scathing lightnings into his, as she uttered, nay, shrieked, into his ears—

"Beware of him! He is the son of Joel Thorp—and the poisoner of my husband!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CONFESSION OF SILAS THORP

"Murder was his familiar, and
Whene'er he beckoned, its red hand
Fell cleaving."
—*The Conspirators*

On the evening after the funeral of Mrs. Bardell, Mrs. Farnsworth came into the library where, for several hours, Dane Walraven had been sitting in mournful abstraction, and held out to him, with a shuddering gesture, a packet loosely tied.

"Read it," she said, as she turned to leave the room, "and then do what you think is for the best afterwards. It is from a monster, and may the kind Lord protect you from him, and keep him and his out of your path—unless you find him here, and deliver him up to the law!"

With a feeling of dread, Dane opened the packet and spread its contents upon a table. The first articles his eyes rested upon were two daguerreotypes, one of which he instantly recognized as that of Doctor Pelham; the other was the portrait of a boy of perhaps fifteen years of age, bearing an unmistakable likeness to the doctor.

"Silas Thorp!" exclaimed Dane, letting the case fall to the floor, in his agitation and amazement. The meaning of Mrs. Bardell, which had been inexplicable

at the time she uttered those terrible words, "He is the son of Joel Thorp," appeared in these two portraits. It explained much; but more awaited him.

With trembling fingers he took up the heavily written document which lay before him, and glanced at it with paling features and steel-like flashes from his eyes—and then he rang for a servant.

"Go to Miss Bardell," said he, "and ask her to come to the library."

Eleanor made her appearance at once, and Dane showed her the daguerreotypes. For a moment she was overcome.

"Oh, Dane," sobbed the poor girl, "it is too horrible! I cannot bear it."

"It is horrible," returned he, sternly, "and yet there is more—more for you to learn, my poor darling. But sit down here, and I will read this paper to you. Sit still and keep control of your feelings as best you can, for what is written here should be remembered by us, for our own sakes, and for the sake of your murdered father, whose death it will be my duty to avenge by bringing the murderer to justice."

Eleanor sank into a chair, while with pale composure Dane read the infamous pages which we now transcribe:

"To the widow of Howard Bardell:—I send you, with this bit of family history and explanation of the course I have pursued toward your late husband, miniatures of my humble self at two eventful dates in my life; one was taken when I left England on the Armadillo for America; the other, when I was so fort-

unate as to revive, under the name by which you knew me, the pleasing (?) acquaintance of the captain of that unfortunate vessel."

(Here followed a detailed narrative of all the events in the lives of his mother, his father, and himself, with which we are already acquainted.)

"I went to New York, studied medicine, returned to this city, and took an office as near as I could to your residence, hoping that fortune would afford me the opportunity I looked for to avenge my mother's death, and the indignities inflicted on my father and myself. Captain Bardell gave me the opportunity sooner than I had expected. I could have saved his life: *I took it!*

"Three of the four accursed beings against the happiness and the lives of whom my family was sworn to plot, are dead. Walter Walraven's wife was seized in the garden at Greystoke Castle by Crouch and my father, gagged, carried to a certain spot in sight of Penrith, and sunk with rocks in the ———. Walter Walraven was struck in the head, while struggling in the Charles River, side by side with my father, Joel Thorp, who hurled a rock at his skull, crushing it, and causing his death. Howard Bardell died from the generous doses of aconite and morphia administered to him by me—Silas Thorp! Dane Walraven still remains. I could have killed him as well; but there is another fate reserved for him. With all his pretty virtues, there is one vulnerable spot in his character, and through that will his ruin be worked out, through the agency of those so deeply wronged by him and his!

"When you read this, I shall be on the sea. I reveal all this because you will, in your turn, reveal it to your child—the daughter of Howard Bardell—and to his ward, the son of Walter Walraven. Farewell—*until the last blow falls.*"

SILAS THORP."

When Dane had read the last word of this extraordinary confession, he turned in his chair to look at Eleanor. Absorbed so absolutely by the horrible story, he had heard no movement from her; and now, when his glance fell upon her motionless figure stretched upon the carpet, he uttered a cry of dismay, and sprang to her assistance. She had listened to the frightful tale with enforced calmness, until the agony it inflicted became insupportable; then, without a moan, she had slipped to the floor in a swoon.

When the unhappy girl returned to consciousness she was lying on a sofa, the kind face of Mrs. Farnsworth bending over her, while Dane knelt near her. They were chafing her hands, and bathing her temples with camphor.

"Oh, Dane, what a frightful dream!" she exclaimed tremulously, rising to a sitting posture, and pushing back her thick hair with a nervous gesture. "What can it all mean?"

"It is no dream, my darling," said he, gently stroking her hand; "unfortunately, the wretch has told the truth."

"What—that papa was—murdered?" she gasped, again growing faint.

"Yes, that your father was murdered by Silas Thorp, and indirectly, your mother's death lies also at his

door; and that my father and mother were murdered by Joel Thorp and his accomplice, Jem Crouch," answered Dane, in hard and measured tones.

"Oh, oh—it is hideous—hideous!" cried the girl, sinking back upon the sofa, while she looked around her with a bewildered stare.

"And now," continued Dane, an inexorable purpose gleaming in his eyes, "there remains for me a stern duty—to bring those three wretches to justice."

"Oh, Dane, what would you do?" demanded Eleanor, grasping his arm nervously. A new fear had seized upon her.

"Hunt them over the world, find them, and—deliver them up to justice, or mete out justice to them myself."

"Oh, heaven, Dane, do you really mean to follow them up?" she asked, terrified at such a miserable prospect.

"Again, I say, it is my duty to find the murderers, and to mete out justice to them—if the arm of the law will not reach them. It would be retributive justice in either case."

"No, no, leave them to God!" moaned the poor girl. Dane smiled bitterly.

"Divine justice," returned he, "will take its course, whatever man may do—whatever I may do. But these monsters have violated *human* laws also, and society demands that they be brought to punishment at the bar of human justice."

"But, Dane, think of the peril to yourself!" urged Eleanor.

"If I thought of the peril to myself," replied he, "I should be a dastard; and if I lay supinely moaning the horrible fate of my parents—and of yours—I should be as heartless a wretch as ever disgraced humanity. No, Eleanor, it is a solemn, an imperative duty, devolving upon me alone, and I must perform it."

"And when—how will you undertake to—to perform it?"

"How I shall begin, and how prosecute, the search for these miscreants, is yet to be determined, my love," returned Dane, soothingly. "But," turning with a tender smile toward her, "we must, first of all, obey the dying request of your mother. Immédiately after the marriage we will go to England. I have intended to go for some time past; I want to visit the scenes of my childhood, and to see the old manor, where I was born, and to visit Carlisle, the early home of your father. It was a mere accident, and one I greatly regretted, that I did not go to the two most sacred places in the world—to me—when I went to Europe. At Carlisle, perhaps we may hear something, obtain some clew that will enable me to find the murderers. At present, however, let us banish all thought of them, and think only of what we have yet to do here."

He kissed her tenderly, and went to his room, leaving Mrs. Farnsworth to soothe her by reassuring words, and the promise that she would come to her in England, if trouble came to her there.

Eleanor was but half consoled. She foresaw in this resolve of Dane's a possibility of new sorrows coming upon them. The past was so full of them, she could

endure no more, she whispered to her old friend, and burying her face in her hands, she strove to conceal her distress.

While she sat absorbed in anxious speculation an hour later, in the same spot on the sofa, old Mrs. Peddie softly opened the library door and peered in at her for a moment with her cavernous eyes, then stole as softly away through the dim passage, muttering in her eerie way—

"Puir bairn, that face o' her, that face o' her! It is the face of one born to suffer and bear for aye. Something is coming again!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE HONEYMOON—WALRAVEN HOUSE

The marriage of Dane Walraven and Eleanor Bardell was consummated in Old South Church during the holiday week, in a quiet manner, no cards of invitation having been sent out.

The wedding-day was beautiful, the bride and bridegroom incomparably handsome, blessed with exuberant health, rich and honored. Surrounded by such auspicious circumstances, surely they had just reason to hope for unalloyed happiness in their future.

Dane had planned a European tour to extend over a period of a year; and having no business as yet to engross or confine him, his preparations were easily made; so that by the time the monthly steamship between New York and Southampton was ready to leave the former port, he was on board with his wife, maid and baggage, with no business to transact in Boston other than to draw on his bankers there from time to time for money.

The voyage across the Atlantic at that period was usually both tedious and dangerous, especially to south of England ports. Nothing, however, occurred on this one to mar the honeymoon of the young couple; and on the first day of February the ship entered the Solent with colors fluttering, a marine band playing,

and a gay group crowding the deck, and eager to debark upon the shores of Old England.

It was late in the day when the passengers were landed, and the first night was therefore spent in Southampton, at the comfortable "Dolphin." Soon after breakfast the next morning the Southwestern railway bore them north, twelve miles—to the venerable cathedral town of Winchester.

"It seems as if we were going to a shrine," said Eleanor, as, snugly reclining in a corner of the warm coach, she looked out with animation at the changing and lovely landscape. The winter was an exceptionally mild one, and many of the trees still retained their green covering.

"It *is* a shrine—to me," replied her husband, dreamily, "although my memory tells me but little about it, of course. Perhaps it is best, too, for I could not have any but unhappy recollections. As it is, I feel the most childish curiosity to look at and run over every spot I played in, and to sit in the room in which I was born."

Eleanor regarded him with glistening eyes, her tender sympathy intensified by the depth of the unselfish love she bore him.

"And I share your curiosity," said she, stealing her dainty hand into his, and giving it a warm little pressure. "Where shall we stop in Winchester, love?"

"At the 'Black Swan,' I think. There, I was told, we can obtain excellent rooms."

At that moment a guard called the station:

"Win-ches-ter!"

"Amen," responded Dane, heartily, bestirring himself with as much liveliness as a schoolboy.

An hour later, they were delightfully installed in a charming suite at the hotel, the quaint carving and fine old furniture receiving from Eleanor as close inspection as if she contemplated purchasing everything.

"It is so un-American," she explained, flitting from one room to another, "so suggestive of the seventeenth century. Oh, I know I shall be deathly tired every night for a year, just from looking at old things."

"Plenty of time to get homesick, Tot," laughed her husband, who sat lazily watching her pretty but unconscious posings in her charming *robe de chambre*.

"Homesick! Not I, you prosy old fellow. Indeed, I assure you, I feel as though I was born here myself."

On the day after their arrival, a large carriage took them to Walraven Manor, now owned by strangers who lived in London, and rarely came down to it. They found it occupied by a care-taker, and had no difficulty in gaining access, after stating their object and pressing a fee into the shriveled hand of the old man who admitted them.

Dane was very thoughtful, on the way back to the hotel, and a dozen times his gaze turned backward, during the brief ride in the open carriage, to view the tall red chimneys of his childhood's home.

Eleanor had been excessive in her demonstrations of delight at the beautiful situation of the manor-house, surrounded by groves, meadows, and bordered by the lovely Itchen. Suddenly she leaned over to Dane, pulled his blonde head down to her cheek im-

pulsively, and put a question which surprised, as much as it delighted him—

"Why not live here always?"

"Just the question I was asking you, mentally," returned he, showing his pleasure by a kiss on the peachy cheek. "But, would you be content?"

"And why not, goosey? We would be only two or three hours distant from London, by the railroad. And as for diversion, I should never, never tire of this deliciously historical region and its natural beauty. Old England—my father's native country, and yours. Doesn't it sound sweet? Then, we could visit our friends in Boston whenever we chose, you know."

"You would soon have friends here," observed Dane, "and in London. My father was a man of large social acquaintance, and people would not be likely to leave us alone, if we settled here."

Dane thought seriously over the matter, and his determination followed his and Eleanor's predilections. An offer was made to the owner of the property, the purchase effected, and Walraven House was once more a family possession.

Within two months afterward, upholsterers and contractors had converted the manor into as charming a country-seat as any gentleman in the south of England could boast of enjoying. Then the young couple moved into it.

"It seems exactly like coming home," remarked Dane, as he sat down to their first supper and meal in the house.

"Yes," exclaimed Eleanor, with animation, "and

everybody about us who was old enough to know your father, remembers him so kindly, and has given you such a welcome."

"That is the English way," replied Dane. "I love my race beyond expression; I am proud of my Saxon ancestry, as proud of it as if I had performed some of the deeds that gave luster to their names."

"Well, who knows but you may yet perform some 'prodigy of valor,' and cast additional credit upon the family name. Ah, but this wonderful old city of Winchester!" continued Eleanor, gazing off at the turrets of the cathedral, in whose venerable sanctuary the upstart Cromwell, belying his Presbyterian faith, once stabled the horses of his troopers.

"City?" laughed Dane, "a handful of people—fourteen thousand."

"Well, it is greater than many of fifty, a hundred and fifty thousand. It had the honor of giving a grave to Canute, and to Alfred the Great; it was the Saxon's capital, the capital of all England," retorted Eleanor with all the fervor of a school-girl.

"Ah, you are already naturalized, I see. Well, tomorrow we will explore the country hereabouts. There are tenth, eleventh, thirteenth, and seventeenth century relics, mounds, ruins, landmarks, and traditions; so you will be able to add richly to your historical cabinet."

"Oh, I am convinced that I shall really bury myself here," laughed his wife, flashing a bright glance at the beautiful Itchen, that wound its glittering coils among the distant oaks.

A quick shudder passed through her husband's frame at the light words just uttered; and he started uneasily, without in the least comprehending the disagreeable feeling they caused him

Was that feeling a premonition? Perhaps; a shadow was approaching, dark and terrible of import, soon to take shape, soon to eclipse the sun that rested now so gloriously upon these two, while they planned a future which never came!

CHAPTER XXVIII

EUGENIE ST. LEGER

“A dainty quean!
With ripe, small mouth, white teeth, deep eyes,
Where sapphires from Sicilian skies
Seem burrowed.”

—*The Conspirators.*

During the two months required to prepare the manor for its new occupants, the Walravens had taken apartments in the metropolis at the “Clarendon,” a family hotel in New Bond Street, then frequented by the best foreigners who wintered in London.

Dane was soon discovered by the old friends and associates of his father, and their cards multiplied rapidly on the cabinet in the reception-parlor. They were delighted to learn that the son of Walter Walraven had come to make his home among the glades of Hampshire; and before the spring buds were opening in the gardens of Walraven House, a round dozen of gay people had promised to come down in May—Dane and Eleanor preceding them a fortnight or more.

And this brings us to the door of an event, the happening of which led to incredible misfortune to the master and mistress of the manor, and to a series of strange events which will claim our attention henceforth to the close of these chapters.

One morning, in the latter part of April, Eleanor sat in her cozy dressing-room, rapidly glancing over

a number of letters brought in by her maid, when Dane appeared at the open door.

"May I come in?" asked he, anticipating the permission she smilingly gave.

"You are just in time to be entertained," exclaimed his wife, holding out to him, in her dainty fingers, an open missive, suspiciously long, and closely written in fearfully fine chirography.

"Where is it from?" asked he, eyeing it, but without venturing to take it. He had a terror, a nervous dread, of feminine letters. "From London, of course," answered Eleanor, who appeared to have been particularly amused at its contents.

"What is it?" demanded Dane, indifferently, as he lounged into a seat near the window.

"Oh, it is not a dressmaker's list, nor a description of the Queen's last drawing-room, toilets, personages, and accidents. However, it is, after all, from the same correspondent who gives me just such interesting details once a week."

"You don't wish me to read it, do you? Give me the postscript, and I will be content."

"No, sir, you must listen to it—unabridged. I wish to consult you afterwards. Now:

"MY DEAREST ELEANOR:—I write in a perfect fidget, as I expect a visit every minute from one of the persons about whom I am on the very point of—Gracious!

"Some one came in a moment ago, and I thought it was the very person—but it wasn't.

"Well, to come to the point at once. I have two

of the most original acquaintances! One is a man. His name is Reverend Ebenezer Doolittle, a parson, of course; but he is from Boston. There! I know I have your attention now, and that you will want to hear all about him. You shall, dearest. Imprimis, he is portly, forty, red-faced, short-bodied (he waddles!) a bibliomaniac. He is (I whisper this) constantly laboring to deceive himself, pretending to be full of sanctimony, to devotion to religion; but it is all cant, all *self*-devotion—manlike, you know. But, I assure you, he is perfectly original—in London; a character; and you know characters are rare. The other, also an original, but not in the Ebenezer way, is a woman. And now, I will describe her *faithfully*, before I say more of the object of this extremely long letter, so that you may act advisedly in answering me.

“Well, here I go:

“Her name is Eugenie St. Leger. Nothing commonplace in that, is there? She is five feet two (delicious height, the men say,) plump and round—a marvel in form, with *such* wrists and ankles! Her hands and feet are like a Spanish donna’s, her features are quite regular, somewhat Grecian, her complexion creamy and clear. Her black eyes have a bluish cast, and actually bewitch one; her black hair is luxuriant and undulating, and she coils it artistically over a superb, classic head. She is soft-voiced, and so persuasive in her looks, her manner, her speech. Too seductive to be left alone with another woman’s husband, the women say; but oh, it’s amusing, the way *mine* raves about her! I let him. (Take note of that,

however.) She is very intelligent—got her education in Paris, which is a school for everything. Then, she is only twenty-four. She sings; note that. She came from Naples here, and I met her six weeks ago—just after I first met you, you darling. She married very young. Her husband was a mere boy, her guardian's son, who had consumption, and died a year after she married him. Accommodating, was he not? She says nothing of herself. But her bankers are Denby & Cross, and some body or booby found out that she has a fortune there.

"Eugenie and I went off to Brussels the week after I met you, and she stayed there until yesterday. We have corresponded since I returned, and she writes she is coming back. Short acquaintance, you will say; but somehow she actually wound herself into my affections—as you did, dearest. No, not exactly into my affections—

"I'm afraid of her! I positively am; I cannot understand her. She has coiled herself around the heart of every man she has met here in society; she is *in* society, very much so. Nobody knows how she did it, but everything of that kind happens in London, you know.

"This is all I know of Eugenie—all that *anybody* knows. It all seems perfectly satisfactory to the men, of course; and of course to the women perfectly unsatisfactory—myself excepted, though I am eccentrically indifferent to pedigree.

"And now for the explanation of this:

"I have reached it at the very moment I hear the

Reverend Ebenezer Doolittle's nasal voice in the hall, inquiring 'if I am ready to go with him to the Foundling Hospital, in Great Guilford Street.' Heaven knows what he wants there.

"'Now, I wish to bring my two originals down with me, when I come on your kind invitation next week. May I? I assure you they will prove decided acquisitions to your company.' Consider well, however, before you say yes; for, I repeat that Eugenie is an object of dread to wives, and of averison to would-be's. Still, I would *so* like to bring her. *Au revoir*, dearest.' "

Mr. Walraven had listened amusedly while his wife, in an inimitable voice, read this effusive billet. But he made no comment when she had finished.

"What shall I say to her?" asked Eleanor, mischievously eyeing him.

"Oh, let them come," replied he carelessly. "Unless," he added, tapping the fair cheek with his fingers, "you think I am too susceptible to withstand the young widow."

"I'll try you," returned his wife. "I do not propose to hide you, sir, from every pretty woman who threatens to make an attempt upon you."

"*Every* pretty woman!" exclaimed Dane, rallying her, "you are already infected, it would appear, since *the* pretty woman in the case seems to fill the horizon, eh, Tot?"

Unconscious prophet! She was soon to fill the horizon of both; she was the shadow coming, to darken and to illumine it. A paradox was Eugenie St. Leger, indeed!

CHAPTER XXIX

THE STUDY OF A FASCINATING WOMAN

“‘Unconscious grace’ in her were studied poses;
Her very faults would have outwitted Moses,
So much they seemed like pity’s sacrifice
To weaker mortals.” *—Fair Felix.*

The first week in May brought every one of the invited guests to Walraven House, and among them, of course, were Eleanor’s prolific London correspondent and her two “originals,” who will henceforth have much to do with our story, and should therefore be introduced at once.

The Reverend Ebenezer Doolittle was the first to cross the threshold of the manor after his chaperon, and was enthusiastic in his salutations, when the courteous host welcomed him.

“And you are a Boston boy?” exclaimed he, beamingly, his faded blue eyes taking in the tall figure of the “boy” with evident satisfaction.

“An English boy,” replied Mr. Walraven, smilingly, “but reared in Boston.”

“A churchly city, and a saintly,” observed Ebenezer, with a quaint twang in his gurgling voice, “a lee-tle ultra, perhaps, in religion during its colonial state; but in such days the wolf suckled its cubs in the streets of Askalon, and the gospel was denied by the stranger. Your helpmate—is she, also, a—daughter of the Puritan city?”

"A native," replied Walraven, who was already congratulating himself on this very odd acquisition to his party, "but of English parentage."

"Ah, to be sure. And you have come to abide in the land of your father and forefathers, eh? Quite natural, quite so, yes. Are you of the Methodist faith?"

"Episcopalian."

The parson appeared somewhat disappointed.

"Ah," he observed, "then you will peradventure seek spiritual life in the bosom of the Church of England?"

Before Mr. Walraven could respond to this observation, Mrs. St. Leger was presented to him by Eleanor, and to the latter he consigned the pious guest, while he offered his arm to the young widow, and with her entered the drawing-room.

Mrs. St. Leger was all, apparently, that her chap-eron had depicted; and yet, prepared though he certainly had been by the elaborate description read to him by his wife, he started with surprise when his eyes met those of the fair stranger. Unfathomable eyes they were, in which he read nothing but mystery. As she raised them, their glances rested briefly and moved slowly, with a strange quietness in their transient gaze; yet those dark and quiet glances left a subtle influence wherever they dwelt. Her elegant figure, richly though somberly dressed, was the incarnation of sensuous grace as it moved slowly on through the long drawing-room with an undulating motion, which in itself was a fascination. Her rather languid voice, never raised above a confidential tone, conveyed an idea of slumbering power, of mastered passion, at once

seductive and impressive. In voice and feature the suggestion of power, hidden but alert, was something that one felt rather than saw, and it compelled respect, while it excited opposition. The first evening of her arrival sufficed to give her an ascendancy over the mind of every person with whom her own collided. Ay, collided; for whether it were man or woman, the first impulse was, invariably, to resist her; and yet, as invariably, did each one succumb. To what they succumbed would have been impossible of definition. When she was present, hostility went down before her; when she was absent, it revived. The haughtiest dame of the gentry who met her under the Walraven roof (and it is there we are to study her) forgot her resolves, or abandoned them as useless after half an hour's conversation with the soft-voiced woman who moved with such quiet self-assertion, who appeared so indifferent to hauteur, to chilling reserve, to those oblique glances and that cold scrutiny with which women destroy each other. The hauteur melted into graciousness under the slow glance of her mysterious eyes; the sidelong stare failed under her own languid scrutiny; frowns gave way to conciliatory smiles when she spoke, so sweet was the cadence of her perfectly modulated voice.

Perhaps the women would have avoided her if they had dared, or if they could have avoided her; but, in the first place, to have attempted to ostracise her would have been the sheerest folly. They would have found themselves deserted, even by their own spouses; for wherever Eugenie was, wherever the scent of helio-

trope (her favorite perfume, oddly combined with something else into a chemical mystery,) there the men gathered. Besides, the women, while they wished to repel her, were irresistibly drawn toward her. They submitted; their anger dulled, numbed, by the inexplicable charms, the undemonstrative yet compelling force, which not one of them could define, and none could resist.

"Why is it," Walraven asked her one evening, while they were roaming about the park a little apart from the other guests, as they frequently managed or "happened" to be; "why is it, that you have so little and yet so much of the conqueror about you, that you never seek any one, yet they—that is, every one is always with you or trying to get into your presence? You are envied by the women, and if you were rendered absolutely helpless at any moment, they would thank heaven for your downfall, and exult in your humiliation. Still, you disarm them without a word, as often as with a look that has neither resentment, surprise, nor annoyance in it. What is the secret of your power over them? It puzzles me."

Eugenie observed him with amusement betraying itself in her eyes, satire revealing itself in the corners of the sensitive mouth. She motioned him to sit down under one of the beeches, dropped languidly into the settee, and looked at him silently, toying with a spray of jessamine.

"Dare you answer?" asked Dane, banteringly.

"Why are you curious concerning my influence with my own sex? It implies that you are indifferent as to

the extent of my influence with your own, or that you do not credit me with having any."

"Oh, I am a student of human nature," replied Walraven, cautiously. He had already become conscious that there was danger in the very atmosphere that surrounded this woman, and he thought he had been thus far guarding himself well.

When the ruler of a domain erects a wall on his frontier to prevent incursions into it, his neighbor immediately takes notice. "He is weak at the core," will be his reflection, and he prepares for an assault at once, or watches his opportunity to creep into the citadel through some unguarded way.

Dane Walraven had imitated the cautious ruler, and Eugenie was amusing herself by counting the very large chinks in his wall!

Presently she uttered a faint sound—a ripple of merriment which flowed from her full throat like that which a lute-string gives forth when vibrated by a passing wind-breath. She never laughed loudly, or "heartily," but her dulcet semitones were much more expressive, and they touched the ear with an exquisite sound, which lingered there long afterwards.

"You are a student of human nature; how interesting!" she said, after a demure silence. "I presume you are quite familiar with—yourself, for instance?"

"I fear not," he confessed, showing her another passage through his wall as he proceeded; "of late, I have found the study of others more interesting."

"Yes? But, now do you really think much progress can be made in the study of other people before knowing much about one's self?"

"Possibly not," replied he, disconcerted.

"Certainly not," declared Eugenie. "And now I will answer your question: *I know myself.*"

If Dane Walraven had known himself as well, he would have fled that night to the farthest corner of the earth!

CHAPTER XXX

REV. EBENEZER MEETS THE ENEMY

“A man of weight, quite fourteen stone, at least;
Shaven, and decent clad; in short, a priest;
A sort of Friar Tuck in disposition,
Who oft declared red war was his true mission.”

—*Fair Felix.*

The Reverend Ebenezer Doolittle was an unconscious hypocrite—made such by his domestic training. He was the son of a Presbyterian deacon who had held iron rule over his family by way of putting into practice his orthodox opinions. He had taught Ebenezer all the outward signs and observances of religion, without inculcating its principles; and the latter had, from sheer habit, followed in the footsteps of his austere father. By the time he had reached manhood he was a fanatical biblicist, a Methodist deacon, and in his own opinion a devotee. The faith of his father, severe as its ritual was, not permitting him sufficient latitude for his pharisaical manifestations, he had forsaken it for Methodism soon after the paternal yoke had been lifted from him; and now at forty he was a self-styled evangelist, conversing almost wholly in Bible phraseology—it being his chosen duty and appointed task, he said, to make the Bible a household word among the heathen and the worldly-minded.

One bright morning, soon after his appearance at

Walraven House, the reverend gentleman went forth for a stroll by himself through the ancient town. He had been told at breakfast by his host, that the barracks of the troop quartered in Winchester were inside the palace walls begun by Charles II, and never completed, and he desired to see with his own eyes the profanation of the royal edifice, intending to use the "material" in his contemplated sermon for traveling laymen, entitled—"How are the mighty fallen!

Filled with the great theme, he waddled along the street with an accession of dignity which attracted toward him more than one glance of curiosity, if not of reverence, until he suddenly perceived at some distance in front of him, a number of rough-looking men engaged in an incipient riot.

Instantly, the evangelistic tendency asserted itself.

He hastened forward as fast as his short legs and corpulent body would permit, exclaiming loudly, as he approached the scene:

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"

Not the slightest attention was paid to this majestic if unusual inquiry by the belligerents who were warming for closer work, and the evangelist came nearer, with an offended look in his rosy face, and shouted: "Flee from the wrath!"

A loud and mocking laugh from his immediate rear caused him to turn his head in that direction, and his faded blue eyes rested in astonishment upon a young girl on horseback, who had just drawn rein, and was coolly watching the threatened *melee*.

Close behind the young equestrienne, sitting stiffly on a stout cob, was an attendant, a typical flunkey of a groom, who was clad in a long green surtout, a red waistcoat with large pocket flaps, orange-colored breeches, blue woolen hose drawn very tightly over a pair of enormous calves, and cowhide shoes embellished with huge silver buckles.

The close-cropped head of this individual was adorned with a crushed tall hat of white furry material, his face—apparently a series of knots—was extremely rubicund, his whole appearance, in short, was exceedingly grotesque—at least to the preacher. His eyes roved rapidly from mistress to servant and back to her again, while his nervous fingers were twined together as though he was struggling to keep them from taking part in the disturbance.

Apparently, he was on the point of speaking to the fair apparition, when a movement of the brawlers in his direction brought them dangerously near.

"Take care!" rang out the girlish voice, as she pointed with her whip at the scene before her. A crowd had been gathering; and, ere the evangelist could retreat, he found himself involved in a bewildering maze of people, all of whom were vociferating frantically, leaping about with the agility of kangaroos, and generally manifesting all the peculiarities and eccentricities of a mob.

The preacher looked wildly around at the encompassing sea of frowsy heads, and his eye sought the spot where the young horsewoman had a moment before been, but she was no longer there. Suddenly, he

heard her clear voice rising above the din, and caught a momentary glimpse of her in the very thick of the fight. She had been surrounded, and to all appearances, instead of being dismayed, enjoyed it.

No attempt was made to unhorse the girl; but hostilities immediately began between the rioters and the groom, who, in truth, was by no means loath to engage with them. Briskly sliding from his cob, he stood with his back against the imperturbable beast, and presented two enormous fists in front of his foes; shouting lustily:

"'Ere's two pills for the biggest two!"

His mistress had caught the bridle of his horse, and holding her loaded riding-whip dexterously in her other small gauntleted hand, she flashed a look of defiance at the upturned faces.

"Into 'em, Gingham!" cried she, with refreshing vim, while she urged her spirited horse to the outskirts of the struggling throng.

The prospect of breaking a few heads, and getting his own bruised, was apparently to Gingham's liking; for at the command of his mistress he proceeded to deal out blows and kicks in three directions at once, and with astonishing vigor and celerity.

The situation was not so much relished by the preacher. He had by this time managed to become the central figure in the *melee*, in disagreeable proximity to a score of dirty fists and grimy faces. In vain were his frantic efforts to extricate himself from the jam which threatened to deprive him of his chronically short breath; he only succeeded in bringing down

upon his own shoulders the blows intended for more fortunate heads.

A mob is never quite certain who is to blame, who it is expected to hit, or what it is fighting for; and this mob was as willing as any other to fight anything that came in its way, and to hit anything that remained within its reach. The Reverend Ebenezer Doolittle was not only within its reach but conspicuously in its way, and the combat began to center about him.

But the excellent man's light was not to be extinguished by a vulgar mob; he was reserved for a better fate, that he might assist in one of the most important scenes in this dark drama. A champion was near, coming to his rescue, as we shall instantly see.

CHAPTER XXXI

A RESCUE.—MISS AGNES BLOUNT, "A 49ER"

Fortunately for Ebenezer, the fair horsewoman and her servant had not left the scene.

On the contrary, she appeared to enjoy it immoderately, and she still hovered in the vicinity, waiting for the groom to rejoin her. That individual had finally succeeded in doing so, after some reciprocal hammering, when her dancing black eyes suddenly discovered the preacher's predicament. With prompt decision, she charged to the rescue, supported by Gingham, and the two together succeeded in dragging the victim from the mob's clutches.

Now, the good man secretly loved a fight; to sum up his weaknesses in a word, he was fond of spicy people and things, good wine, pretty girls, and pugilistic exhibitions.

As soon, therefore, as he was beyond the reach of the rioters, he stood on the outskirts of the mass of legs and arms that writhed and twisted like the tentacles of an octopus, and eagerly watched the scene, oblivious to the fact that his face was scratched, his garments torn and disordered, his appearance decidedly apoplectic. The fight was now progressing gloriously a few yards away, but swaying a little dangerously again in his direction.

"Get back further, or they'll gobble you again, partner!" called his fair champion, in a tone of kindly warning.

But here the Anglo-Saxon blood of the worthy gentleman began anew to assert its quality; he would not budge a step further.

"Avaunt, Beelzebub!" came his war-cry in response.

But here a lurch of the crowd pressed him across the street, where, with admirable strategy, he pounced upon a screen for defense.

As the struggle between the two factions became hotter and fiercer, so did the noble excitement of the reverend gentleman become more earnest and demonstrative. His eagle eye saw an advantage to be gained by the side nearest him, and his belligerent soul rose to the opportunity. Crouching on all fours behind a barrel of potatoes—which but partly hid his portly form from the combatants—he assumed the authority of a general. For one moment he bobbed up, with empurpled face and flashing eye showing above his barricade, and shouted with sublime fierceness:

Hit out from the shoulder! Scoundrels! Cowards!" and immediately bobbed down again behind his novel breast-work, out of sight and reach, as he congratulated himself, of the rioters.

But Mr. Doolittle was over-confident; the very next instant there was a rush toward him, his barrel was overturned, and the dignified follower of St. John rolled over and over again under the vulgar feet of the mob. He had received a stinging blow on the nose, as he went down, which caused him to expostu-

late in the liveliest manner, and to forget for a moment the language of the prophets. Another of the rioters approached him as he scrambled upon his legs, and made a pass at him with a stick.

"Avaunt!" shouted the beleagured preacher, dodging the descending cudgel. "Remove thy stroke away from me, Armageddon! Already am I consumed by the blow of thy brother's hand!"

This last expression of the persecuted evangelist is overwhelming evidence of his agitation; otherwise he, the biblical teacher, could not have failed recollect that Armageddon—Satan—had no brother; at least we hope not.

Again did the fair stranger come to his aid; while Gingham created a diversion in his favor, she dashed her horse between his assailants and himself, and urged him down the street at a trot.

When the three fugitives had gone at this brisk pace for perhaps a hundred yards, they were met by a posse of constables who were hurrying to the scene of the disturbance, and who stopped them by extending their staves across the street.

"'Ello!" cried the foremost of the officers, "wot 'ave you been up an' doin' of? Come, be sharp, I say!"

"My brother," answered the preacher, straightening himself with a movement of dignity somewhat incompatible with his dilapidated condition, "we are fleeing from the wrath of the ungodly!"

"Shut up, old penny-tract!" cried the young lady scornfully, to the intense amazement of the whole party. "Say," to the constable, "we're running away

from a mob," she explained sharply, setting her diamond-like eyes upon the tipstaff.

"Hoh! you got mixed in a row with un, did ye?" observed he, grinning broadly.

"Rather," assented the young lady, coolly, gazing back. "And—by the jumping jingo, if there aren't some of 'em coming after us!"

"'Old 'ard!" shouted the foreman, forming a cordon of his men across the street, as three rough-looking fellows came toward them at a run. But their intentions were peaceful; they drew up in line, wheezing loudly, and were seized vigorously by the tipstaves.

"Wot do ye mean, by breaking the Queen's peace now?" demanded the chief, sternly.

"Gents," protested one of the men, "we wasn't in it, an' we ain't come after nothink unlawful."

"What do you want, then?" inquired the young woman, "a sermon?"

"Gents," resumed the man, keeping his bleared eyes glued to the tipstaff, "we just want this 'ere gen'l'man, *and* this 'ere lady, to come back with us an' show theirselves to the cops up there wot is a-sayin' as 'ow we killed 'em, an' they've took some of our coves for the killin'."

But the late experience of the preacher had made him suspicious.

"Don't trust 'em," he whispered to his companion, who seemed inclined to go back, "they hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web! He that eateth of their eggs of sedition, dieth; and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper!"

'Oh, simmer," interrupted she, disdainfully; and turning impatiently away from the stupefied preacher, she said to the grinning officer:

"Say, cully, you go back there to the fracas, say that you've just met up with the young lady, the lady's groom, and the parson; that the lady's got the cinch on life for a forty year term, that her name is Miss Agnes Blount, (Ag, for short,) and she is now corraled at the George Inn, with her father—Mr. Louis Blount, a California 49er. Tell 'em—if they're anxious—that we're coming to England; maybe we'll buy a ranche here. We are out from the wild and windy west, and we *may* stock up with coyotes. Don't mention that, though, till ye get a corner on 'em, or—if you *do* mention it, why just mention it to yourself. See you later, parson. Come, George Ingham—Gingham, for short, eh?"

With a condescending smile and nod all round, the singular creature whipped into a lively trot, with Gingham in pursuit, and left the bewildered men to stare after her and disperse.

The Reverend Ebenezer made his way as expeditiously as his numerous bruises would permit, back to Walraven House, where he found his host and several guests regaling themselves in the butler's pantry with a cold lunch, after a morning with the red deer.

With an unimpaired appetite he set to, at Dane's invitation, and soon forgot, between the edibles, the ale, and the story of his adventures, all the aches they had produced. Reaching across the board, he grasped a huge piece of mutton pie in both his chubby hands, and exclaimed with unction:

"It is written, that Joseph shall have two portions," and added, mumblingly, as his teeth sank into the pastry, "see Ezekiel, chapter 47."

When he had quite exhausted his capacity for everything on the board, he gently sighed, leaned comfortably back in his chair, and murmured:

"This was much better than the beginning; and the beginning might have been well, had not Beelzebub come into the midst of those children of evil. Verily, the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. And behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

His companions had stolen out of the pantry; and with this last reflection spoken at the empty bottles, the good man gently closed his eyes, and was soon nodding—nodding.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SHADOW FALLS

“ By his side she sat,
Beating upon a crimson mat
Her little foot. Her yellow hair
Like golden cloud-fleece on her fair
White neck uncoiled.” —*The Conspirators.*

May, with its propitious skies, its emerald leaves and scented apple-blossoms, was drawing to a close.

Several of the guests who had come down to Walraven House at the beginning of the month had returned to London, among them the chaperon of the two “originals,” one of whom had already left with Colonel Blount and his daughter, while the other, Eugenie St. Leger, still remained. Other London friends had come, however, and there yet numbered a round dozen guests at the manor.

Eleanor had impulsively asked Eugenie to stay until the end of the month, instantly regretting her hospitality, and hoping to hear a refusal. But the young widow was enjoying herself, had no other engagements, and amiably consented.

“It is so charming here and so quiet,” she said, in her low tones, turning her fathomless eyes toward the distant river. She was standing in Eleanor’s dressing-room, at the pink-draped window, her arms held straight down behind her, the delicate fingers lightly

clasped; an attitude she always assumed when indulging one of her pensive moods.

"You really like the neighborhood, do you not?" Eleanor asked, glancing uneasily at the exquisite outlines of the figure, over whose pearl-like neck and shoulders the pink curtains threw a delicate rose-tint.

"The neighborhood? Oh, yes," returned Eugenie, dreamily, "but Walraven House—I shall remember the days I have spent in it as long as I live."

The expression of the voice, even more than the words, was peculiar; there was a vibration of suppressed feeling, and Eleanor experienced a disagreeable one, as she conned the words over to herself afterward. She attached no particular significance to them, and felt annoyed with herself because they persisted in recurring to her mind.

The true significance she was soon to learn.

Scarcely a week had elapsed since Eugenie's coming, when Mrs. Walraven had begun to observe her with a disturbed feeling, annoying and persistent in despite of her efforts to banish it. The beautiful and gifted Eugenie St. Leger, whom nobody appeared to know, absorbed her thoughts continually. If at her side, Eleanor was troubled, if absent, she was restless, and went to seek her. Eugenie never was found alone with Dane Walraven, but generally was nestled in an arm-chair in the library, her ivory-like chin sunk into the hollow of the pink palm, poring over a copy of Byron or Homer. But at the approach of her hostess she would lay down her book, and with one of her slow glances would exclaim persuasively:

"Do let us talk; you never discuss the men, a topic always *de trop*—with me."

And Eleanor always obliged her, and always enjoyed such talks; but they left her depressed. She was beginning to fear this woman, not for her somber beauty, but—she said to herself—"illogically, unreasonably."

Perhaps this fear was intuitive, perhaps it proceeded from "instinct," that convenient term for a latent phenomenon which is independent of the will, in its covert operation.

But fear did not keep these two women apart, it drew them together; and in this now constant companionship there was reason. Both were intellectually superior to many of their sex; in education the widow was surprisingly finished; in mere physical beauty both women were almost beyond rivalry, and the contrast between them lent piquancy to the one and dignity to the other. In other respects no comparison was possible; in manners, modes of expression, they were strikingly dissimilar. Both were women of strong will; but while that of Eleanor Walraven was apparent, no one would have ventured to measure the will of Eugenie St. Leger; it seemed beyond that.

Every one was now preparing to return to London; the guests were to leave together.

"So as to break the parting," said one.

"Well," observed Mr. Walraven, "I have decided that there shall be no parting at the doors of Walraven House."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Leger, "can you possibly desire us to take French leave of you two, who

have provided such delightful entertainment for a month? No, sir, there *shall* be a parting, and a tearful one."

"But not here," returned the host. "I propose to complete the round of these 'delightful entertainments' by an excursion into the famous New Forest."

"Capital!" was the general exclamation, and an immediate requisition on the butler was made, in anticipation.

Forty years ago this New Forest was the frequent resort of tourists, antiquarians, sportsmen. At that date it embraced nearly seventy thousand acres of noble woodland, in the midst of which, however, were many clearings and settlements. It was a possession of the Crown, under the direct charge of a Lord Warden, assisted by a lieutenant, verderers, foresters, keepers, etc., and was much better protected than at present against predatory axmen and relic-hunters. The latter, indeed, were not then as numerous as now, although the temptations that awaited these depredators were quite as great. The Forest contained some of the most interesting and valuable ruins to be found in England, some of them dating back as far as the tenth century, while the origin of others was lost in obscurity.

Scattered through its vast extent, also, were a number of villages, the primitive and simple inhabitants of which were supposed to subsist by wood-chopping and charcoal-burning, but whose real and secret occupation was smuggling. One of these villages, the most considerable, was Lyndhurst, the capital of the

Forest, distant some ten miles toward the south from Southampton, the road to which passed midway through another quaint village called Minstead. These two points were now to be visited by Mr. and Mrs. Walraven and their twelve guests.

Three days were to be devoted to the excursion, and the guests were to separate from their entertainers at Southampton, all their luggage having been forwarded to London before leaving the manor.

The party went down by the railway to Southampton, but there they procured horses, it having been arranged to make the excursion through the Forest on horseback. The day had set in with a clouded sun, but one of the party, who claimed to be a "weather prophets," promised a dispersion of the clouds, and by eleven o'clock they were cantering over the Downs. By the time they reached the border of the Forest, however, heavier and darker clouds appeared, and a sullen, moaning sound swept through the forest, presaging a storm.

Several of the company stopped their horses to listen, and as the ominous refrain grew louder, seriously debated the question of going forward or returning to the town.

"Let us go on," urged Walraven, "it is only five miles to Minstead, and there is a very comfortable inn there, where we can remain for the night, if necessary. Yonder comes a forester; I will send him on to secure rooms for us, to order a good fire in the kitchen so that we can dry our clothing if the storm overtakes us."

A loutish-looking fellow was running toward them at a gait that gave excellent promise of his value as a courier, and Dane immediately hailed him and offered him a half sovereign to carry his message. The coin was speedily tucked away somewhere in the green livery, and in another moment the man was darting at a tangent through the tangled undergrowth where no horse could possibly have followed.

The party, now reassured, rode on, Dane riding in front with Eugenie, and Eleanor at the rear. But as the path became more difficult and narrow, the detours necessary to escape the drooping branches changed the relative positions of the riders, until Eugenie and her escort were some distance behind the rest. They had paid little attention to the approaching storm, and at length so animated had their conversation become, that their pace slackened, their bridle-reins dropped on the necks of the horses, and they fell far behind, and were almost hidden from their companions by the thick foliage which gathered about them.

At last the heavy patter of the rain overhead warned the more observant to hurry their gait, and some of the foremost ones shouted back to the others to ride faster, an admonition which every one but the two loiterers heeded at once, as the sound of rapidly receding hoofs now indicated.

Ten minutes afterward, Eugenie peered forward as they rode under the beeches, and exclaimed:

"Oh, they have positively gone on and left us here!"

"Really!" responded Dane, not quite knowing whether to be annoyed or pleased. "Well, we can find

our way without guides or guardians," he added, laughingly.

He was wrong. They needed both.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE HUT IN THE NEW FOREST—A TEMPTED HUSBAND

Dane and Eugenie were alone in the forest. The thick clouds overhead had darkened the heavens, and a twilight spread through the leafy coverture. Only the sighing of the winds among the beeches broke the stillness which makes the solitude of a great forest so impressive.

Alone!

They looked into each others' faces, and the same thoughts seemed to surge through their brains at the same instant.

Almost, but not quite, had their lips pronounced the same words—but they forced them back. Then a sigh, passionate and profound, issued from their troubled breasts. Something, they knew, was impending over them; whether a rod to smite or a hand to bless, they dare not decide. It was a moment of destiny, and they realized it. Whatever they said to each other in that solitary wood, in that isolated spot, would be irrevocable.

With the same impulse moving them, they started forward; it may have been an impulse of self-abnegation. But that can never be known. Fate had decided for them, the tempest was its ally, and their volition counted for nothing.

Suddenly, a crashing peal of thunder and a purple lightning flash simultaneously jarred the earth, and the surcharged clouds poured upon them a torrent of liquid ice.

Eugenie's horse sprang violently aside, as another crash shook the earth under its feet, and, dashing itself against an extending branch, dropped its rider from her saddle, and plunged on, with loud neighs of affright, through the darkening forest.

Leaping from his horse, now plunging and almost unmanageable, and dragging it forward by the bridle, Dane hurried to the spot where Eugenie lay without motion or sound. Her shoulder had struck the branch, and she was insensible. A pang shot into Walraven's heart, as he knelt over her, and looking into her beautiful face in which there was neither color nor expression, he called her name "Eugenie!" in a tone that would have made the white cheek flame, had she heard it. But the dazzling skin took on no tint, the half-open lips, disclosing pearl-like teeth, seemed only to smile at him mockingly.

In an agony of horror and dread, he raised her head and rested it upon his knee, her unkempt hair falling like drapery over it. He took her lifeless hands, and forgetting their delicate beauty, in his terrible fear, beat them together, while he watched the white lids which had closed the mysterious eyes and refused to open under the warmth of his breath.

"Ah, my God!" he groaned, chafing the pallid brow, and pressing her close to his breast with an indescribable tenderness, "she cannot, cannot be dead!"

With a passionate gesture, he stooped lower, and kissed the curved lips, a moment ago so mobile, but now mute and rigid. Death, indeed, seemed to have left its icy breath upon them, and their scarlet hue was gone.

At the instant he lifted his head, a third and mightier peal of thunder, a sheet of purple flame, hurtled and quivered around them; and Dane's horse, breaking away with one wild leap, galloped off through the woods, leaving the two alone in its midst, with a canopy of blackness above them.

A few yards from where Eugenie lay, Dane perceived, by a prolonged flash, a deserted hut, the thatched roof of which appeared to be unbroken, the door of which had long since been carried off. Into its one cavernous room, he bore the insensible girl, laid her upon his coat on the moldering floor, and rushed out into the storm. Thrice he made the circuit of the hut, in a wider and wider circle, in the hope of spying some habitation, but he saw absolutely nothing, save a phalanx, on every side, of swaying and groaning trees. Only these dumb giants of the forest, closing around him with their tossing arms and strange, wild moan, as though articulating their own woes, while they were beaten and torn by the howling wind.

Drenched and shivering, Dane returned to the hut, and again bent over the dark and moveless figure, and again seized its chilly hands, while he called upon her to speak to him.

"Eugenie! Eugenie! Hear me—speak to me, in God's name!"

But never dead slept better; never were dead hands colder than those he pressed to his bosom; those two little hands so eloquent an hour ago, now limp and waxen and pale. The rounded wrists were pulseless, the blood seemed to have flowed back from them, and frozen at her heart.

Still he chafed them, the wrists, the hands, the face, holding her close to his breast.

"Ah, thank God!"

Watching the pale eyelids, he had seen the soft black lashes quiver; and now a sigh fluttered from the pale lips, a pink tinge stole into the marble cheeks.

Then the ivory lids drew back, and Eugenie gazed into his face with a wondering expression in her mysterious eyes, eyes that had haunted him for many a day, though he knew not why—until now.

"What is the matter?" she asked, faintly.

Hurriedly, Dane told her of her mishap, and of their situation. Then her eyes closed again, her bosom trembled against his breast, but she said nothing, and lay as still in his arms as if dead.

The storm without had grown momentarily fiercer; every instant it seemed to threaten the frail tenement as crash after crash, resounding through the forest, shook the ground beneath, while vivid tongues, as if searching for prey, darted into the hut, and revealed to the awed inmates an appalling cavern of blackness outside, in which a hideous carnival was at its height among the shadowy, bending and crashing trees.

With her return to consciousness, Eugenie began to experience fear; her eyes dilated, and stared out at the

awful saturnalia as if fascinated; but she trembled as she looked, and at last, unable to bear more of the uncanny spectacle, she tried to cover her face with her small hands, as if to hide her eyes from the lightning.

"Oh," cried the terrified girl, "we shall be rent to pieces here—"

Her voice was drowned by another terrific and prolonged roar, and she sprang to her feet, and turned toward the doorway, as if to fly.

"Oh, oh, heaven!" she moaned, and sank down upon her knees.

Dane was at her side instantly, and with one arm thrown about her, he took her hands in his, and tried to soothe her, while she shiveringly kept repeating:

"We shall die here!"

"No," said he, abandoning himself to the passionate madness which had seized upon his brain, "no, we shall not die, we will live for each other, Eugenie, I swear it—darling, darling—"

His words were smothered, as he sought the heart-shaped mouth with his hot kisses; and as she knelt there with her head pressed back, her white throat gleaming in the lightning-riven blackness, her black hair streaming downward behind in long and sinuous coils, her wondrous eyes shining like sloes, she looked the siren, the terrible and fatal Circe, drawing some beautiful victim down to perdition.

At that moment there came a pause in the storm. Not a sound, not the patter of a rain-drop, but a solemn hush, as if the very tempest had waited for that unguarded speech, that mad pledge, and the whisper

that came up from the scarlet lips—for terror was now forgotten:

"Dane, Dane! My love, my love!"

Then the storm resumed its sway, and darkness swallowed the hut and all within it.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"TO-MORROW HE SHALL BE ALL MINE!"

Dripping and chilled, the Walraven party had alighted at the Minstead inn without observing the absence of their host and Eugenie St. Leger. A huge kitchen fire awaited them, and they were soon busy in the effort to dry their outer garments before it, prior to retiring to the little bedrooms which had also been provided for them. Suddenly, Eleanor exclaimed, in an alarmed voice:

"Where is Mr. Walraven?"

"And Mrs. St. Leger?" inquired another, scanning the faces that peered at each other through the ascending steam.

No one had seen either of the absent ones after the storm began; and anxiety deepened into positive alarm, as minute after minute elapsed and they had not appeared. Eleanor's fears became insupportable, as she listened to the wild shrieks of the wind and the continuous volleys of thunder which accompanied the fiercest lightnings, and she would have started out into the hurricane, bareheaded and alone, if the gentlemen had not prevented her.

While she was debating with them, a stable-boy, with a very scared face, bolted into the kitchen.

"There be two beasts with saddles on 'em, a-comin'

into the yard!" he stammered, and immediately bolted out again.

Instantly, every one was out in the storm, following the swaying lantern carried by the boy, its flickering and uncertain light revealing a grotesque group, as they gathered around the two steaming animals that stood with heads down, their noses eagerly poking at the stable doors.

"Ah, I knew it, I knew it!"

Mrs. Walraven was wringing her hands in a frenzy of grief, certain that her husband had been killed, struck by lightning perhaps. Exclamations of dismay echoed on every side of her, and the gentlemen shouted for their horses. As soon as they were brought out they mounted, and scattered through the forest, shouting as they went—

"Dane! Walraven!"

But their voices were whirled back on the wind and no sound came from the north save the angry shrieks of the blast. The night rack soon swallowed them up, as they groped onward at the imminent risk of being unhorsed by the branches that reached out into their paths.

Two of the searchers reached the dismantled hut at the same moment; and by the light of the flashes the interior of the room showed them a spectacle which caused them involuntarily to shout:

"Good heaven, they are dead!"

Walraven knelt upon the streaming floor, holding in his arms the drooping figure of Eugenie, whose face was hidden upon his shoulder while both were motion-

less as statues. But at the noise outside added to by the others who had now ridden up, Walraven lifted his head, glanced at the doorway, and called sternly:

‘Who is there?’

But they had drawn back, after a moment’s astonished glance at the tableau within, and he rose to his feet, and approached the doorway.

Then they presented themselves to him; but in so constrained a way that he knew intuitively what they had seen, and knew also how they would view it.

With the assistance of one of his friends, Dane placed Eugenie in her saddle, and the party at once rode on to Minstead in utter silence.

Meantime, Eleanor remained in the inn, a prey to worse than anxiety, surrounded by the ladies of her party, who secretly shared her fears, while trying to reassure her of her husband’s safety. The loud rattling of the windows, the trembling of the building, and the increasing uproar of the tempest augmented her terror, until it became a difficult task to prevent the wife from rushing out in a wild search for the one who, at that very moment, was betraying her.

At last, while they were huddled together again in the kitchen, as if their safety lay in close companionship, there was a flash of lanterns on the window-panes, and directly came the sounds of horses’ feet, and of stable-men welcoming the returned party; and then every one flew to the doors.

“Dane, Dane! Thank God you are safe!”

With this natural and tender cry, Mrs. Walraven had darted forward with arms outstretched, as her husband

was ushered into the room. But the instant she was about to throw her arms about his neck she shrank back from him and stood still, while she watched the half-angry, half-contemptuous expression on his face, an expression she had never seen there before. And while she looked, he said, almost fiercely:

"Don't be effusive; there is nothing the matter—and you should not indulge in hysterics."

Confounded by this speech, as strange as it was cruel, Eleanor turned her eyes upon Eugenie. The latter had quietly crept into the room, and was now leaning over the blazing hearth, drying her long hair, which glistened with the rain-drops, and fell down over her rounded shoulders in an elfish fashion, her eyes glowing strangely, her mouth twitching as if with the effort of suppression, her wet garments clinging like the chiseled drapery of a statue about her form.

"She is a witch!" murmured the wife, staring at the girl with a new suspicion. Her instinctive fear of Eugenie had then a foundation. Alone with her husband in the midst of that dark forest for hours—held there for a while by the storm, that was true, but by their own fault—they had been found together in a deserted hut; and the finders had avoided looking at him since their return. What could that mean?

A heart-sickening faintness came over her; but her pride refused to give her suspicions even a name. She turned to her husband, and with the first touch of hauteur she had ever indulged in with him, said icily:

"Our friends may wish to go to their rooms now,

and get off their wet wraps. We can have supper served in two of the small rooms for the ladies, and you gentlemen can eat in the dining-room, where you will have to sleep to night; the landlord has provided cots for you, and you will be quite comfortable."

Dane had been watching his wife furtively for the last few minutes, and he saw by her unusual manner the brewing of a storm, the first in their very brief marital existence. He dreaded the search of those clear and honest eyes, and was secretly pleased at the arrangements which were to separate him for that night from Eleanor.

Had he known at that moment that he was to look upon that beautiful face upon no other night until it had passed the portals of a tomb, he would have been less complacent. Perhaps such knowledge would have saved him—and her; the one from a deadly stroke, the other from a horrible remorse.

But where passion enters, blindness follows; reason flies before it, and conscience lies stifled. In the heart of Dane Walraven, at that crisis in his life and his wife's, passion was dominant, and there was room for no other lodger.

But on this last night, Dane Walraven slumbered feverishly, fitfully, as did one other in that little inn; but still another looked out on the pallid moonlight, now faintly veiled by the parting clouds after the storm, and slept not at all. She was thinking of her recreant husband who had succumbed to the "first pretty woman" she had risked with him. Her lips curled with scorn, as she said this to herself; but the scorn passed, and she whispered sadly:

"I was blind; that woman has a terrible gift!"

As for him, he was tossing in a half-dream, thinking not of her whom he had sworn to honor and protect, but of the woman who lay in her chamber above, staring up at the whitened ceiling, at the red coal in the candle, and murmuring again and again, as the fateful hours rolled back:

"To-morrow he shall be all mine—all mine. My love, my Dane!"

CHAPTER XXXV

THE FALL OF DANE WALRAVEN—THE FACE AT THE CHAPEL DOOR

Before midnight the storm had entirely ceased, the stars had taken their celestial stations, and a white moon had bared its face, and looked down in a ghostly fashion upon the drenched earth. When the night had fairly waned, the morning opened as smilingly as if Nature had not, a few hours before, indulged in as fierce an outbreak as ever was fanned by the Furies.

With dry clothing, considerably rumped, after a steaming breakfast, and under a clear sky, the excursionists started off toward Lyndhurst, fully recovered from their last night's depression. The guests enlivened the woods with songs and laughter and jest, as they ambled on under the still dripping canopy, determined to make this last day one of unbroken enjoyment.

But this last day of pleasure was to close in sorrow; its miserable ending was to be the beginning of a tragedy.

Walraven now rode by the side of his wife, as if he would make amends for past neglect, or that her suspicions might be averted. But neither of them profited by this close proximity which three months before would have called from the lips of each those expres-

sions of endearment so precious to oovers. In the breast of Eleanor, all feeling appeared to have died, her soul seemed sunk in apathy, and only her eyes, restless and observant, betrayed her thoughts. Dane was equally taciturn, and rode on mechanically, without attempting a word of conversation.

The constrained manner and the silence of the pair finally attracted the attention of those about them; the men looked grave and thoughtful, the women curious; the former knew, and the latter believed, that something was wrong between the husband and wife, and all attributed it to the agency of Eugenie St. Leger.

"The widow is doing her work well," whispered a handsome young rider to her escort, as she glanced toward the couple in front.

"Yes, she displays a vast deal of enterprise," he responded, with a shrug, as he remembered the scene in the hut. The gentlemen had promised each other to say nothing of what they had seen in the forest, and the ladies were left entirely to their own surmises; but their imaginations were quite equal to the necessity and to the "occasion." The agility of woman's fancy is something superhuman; and the breast of every one of the fair creatures who cantered after their silent entertainers was in a state of tumult over the probabilities and the possibilities. By the time they had ridden a league, the possibilities had become probabilities and the probabilities had become certainties--in their excited minds--and they were impatient to get by themselves, in order that they might exchange and confirm their amiable suppositions and conclusions.

Silence at length settled so generally over those immediately behind Dane that he began to notice it, and suspecting its cause, he tried to converse with his wife.

"Our friends are getting dull " he whispered, leaning toward her in his saddle.

"Indeed?" returned she, indifferently, without turning her head toward him.

"Yes," he said, flushing with embarrassment, "had we not better rouse ourselves a little?"

"You will recover your own spirits by seeking more congenial company," was her cool reply.

"Eleanor!" exclaimed her husband, fearful of a 'scene.'

But Eleanor kept her face steadily to the front, and paid him no further attention. He tried to converse with her, in a nervous way, but she hardly heard him, and certainly did not heed him, for her answers were mere monosyllables spoken in a hard voice, while he on his part scarcely knew what he was saying.

Once, when he heard behind him the low, liquid laugh of Eugenie St. Leger as she answered some badinage, he started suddenly out of his abstraction, and impulsively turned to look back. But his wife was watching him with a scorching fire of scorn in her expressive eyes. He hastily resumed his position in the saddle, reddening as violently as if she had detected him in some flagrant act of infidelity.

"She thinks me unfaithful!" he said to himself, with a desperateness that made him breathe hard and clutch at his bridle-rein.

Her eyes at last became unendurable to him, and he spurred his horse forward, leaving her to put the best construction she could upon his desertion.

But with a tumult of anger and pain within her, the young wife preserved the most perfect outward composure, and called after him, with a naturalness of voice which astonished the rest:

"Dane, keep within sight of us, unless you wish to lose yourself again!"

Understanding the thrust, his face took fire, but he did not reply.

Walraven's abrupt departure from Eleanor's side afforded secret amusement to the ladies, even while they pitied her, with that singular combination of cruelty and compassion characteristic of the sex. But the smiles died out of their faces when they saw their lieges and gallants leaving them and flocking about Eleanor until she was surrounded, and bestowing upon her an unusual amount of gallant attention.

Even Eugenie was deserted; but the chagrin her companions exhibited was, to all appearances, not at all felt by her. She gradually dropped to the rear, betraying not the least embarrassment at her isolation from the rest. Her scarlet lips wore a placid smile of contentment, her classic head was poised with as much stately grace as if she had been attended by a score of plumed cavaliers, her eyes were alight with a strange expression of perfect independence of surroundings. The other women of the party, as they saw her unconscious nonchalance, never admired her more, and their glances persistently turned upon her

undecipherable face and lithe and graceful form, despite their impatient efforts to turn their thoughts and eyes elsewhere.

"She is a perfect enigma."

"Nothing can disconcert her."

"She is a curiosity—to me."

Such were the side remarks called forth from the fair ones by her insouciance. But she rode on without a glance at them, without a thought of them, to all appearances engrossed by the woodland scene, and by her own seemingly enviable thoughts.

There was a general feeling of relief when the hostlery at Lyndhurst was reached. To all of them the ride had been an uncomfortable one—except in Eugenie's case; in this instance, as in every other, she was still an "original."

When Eleanor alighted, she felt that it would be impossible to much longer control the tumult that agitated her bosom; she could not quell it, and it was threatening to overcome her. Still she tried hard to dissemble, and angrily strove to banish her fear, because it humiliated her.

In the neighborhood of the Forest capital was a quaint and anti-mediæval chapel, part of a rehabilitated church erected in the thirteenth century. Some three hundred yards beyond this ruin was a cromlech, of mysterious origin, but supposed to be Druidical, although this was a mooted question. A controversy over its authors at Oxford had brought savants and archæologists to the vicinity, to see with their own eyes what the learned doctors had been disputing about.

These two curiosities were the last on the list prepared by Mr. Walraven for the delectation of his guests; and after an hour or two spent in Lyndhurst, the excursionists set out for the chapel and the mysterious fane.

Whether by accident or preconcerted arrangement we shall not attempt to decide, but true it was that the last to leave the chapel were Dane and Mrs. St. Leger.

They had stopped at a memorial stone, gravely speculating over the life history of the venerable sleeper beneath it, until the rest of the company had departed and were at some distance from the chapel.

Suddenly they perceived that they were alone.

"They have gone on to the cromlech," observed Dane, reflectively, as they approached the low outer entrance.

"And without us," said Eugenie, musingly. "How I love an empty church! It is so solemn, so still, so peaceful."

For a moment there was silence between them. They had paused, thinking. Their breathing was disturbed, their bosoms agitated strangely. They raised their eyes slowly to each other's, questioningly, timidly, an indescribable yearning in them. All in a moment, with almost inarticulate cries, they rushed into each other's arms—

"Eugenie, I love you! I love you!"

And a smothered response came from her, as he held her to his breast—

"Oh, Dane, Dane, here is my heaven!"

To have heard them, to have seen them, one would have said they were Italian born, so passionate their expressions, their looks, their embraces!

But only for a brief moment did their ecstasy last. Even while they gave themselves up to it, all the passion within them was frozen by a cry. A very wail of despair smote their ears, and sent them shrinking back from each other. Then they looked toward the arched entrance, and saw a white face, whose staring eyes seared into the brain of both, peering through the shadows at them. It hovered there for one awful moment—then vanished.

"Ah, we are lost!" cried Eugenie, hiding her face upon his bosom.

"Yes! It is all over," said he, hoarsely, "we must fly!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

"YOUR MISTRESS IS DEAD!"

Walraven House had no longer a master. He had said when the ghostly face disappeared from the chapel door:

"It is fate. Now, everything may go—but you! Come!"

Then he had hurried her forth; they had mounted their horses in mad haste, and had raced, as if for life, to Southampton, boarded a train standing at the station for the north, and left it at Winchester.

Soon there came a thundering at the doors of Walraven House, and the startled servant who opened it started back from the white-faced man who darted into the hall and sped up the broad stairs. It was the master, no longer lord of himself nor of anything save a ruin, deep, eternal, damnable.

After awhile the servant, cowering in the corner of the great hall, and listening to the shuffling sounds upstairs as the madman huddled his clothes and jewels and money into a leathern trunk, saw the white hand beckoning him from the top of the stairs, and going up, with his knees trembling, and his honest heart swelling with the grief he dared not show, the madman said:

"Carry this to the depot, and hasten. I will follow."

This was what the servant related to his mistress, after her return alone, and while she sat in her husband's dressing-room, in the midst of a scattered wardrobe, to hear the miserable details of her husband's flight.

"And the woman? Did you not see her at the station?"

Eleanor was painfully calm, but her face had the look of a woman whose youth was past, whose hopes are behind her, who faces the twilight.

"I saw her walking along the platform," replied the man, whose eyes were blurred with tears. "She wore a veil over her face, and she kept away from Mr. Walraven, and they never looked at each other. When he got into a car, she got in also, but not in the same compartment. Then the train went off to Lunnun."

"And he said nothing about—his returning?"

"No, my lady," the man was sobbing now.

"How did he look? How did he act, then—as he got into the coach?"

"Like one distraught. He appeared like a person going mad."

"Ah, yes, it *was* madness!"

All the servants were dismissed except this man, the cook, and one maid. Walraven House was closed to visitors; and even the parish minister was not admitted. Eleanor had dismissed the world as she had her servants, that world which had, until a few hours before, been a realm of enchantment, a garden filled with

flowers of love, and which was now—a charnel house. She was not too young to know that those who would come to her now from this changed world would bring to her nothing but insolent pity for a deserted wife; so she, wisely or unwisely, buried herself away from it, and from that day never a laugh was heard in house or manor, and never a song, except the songs of the birds, domiciled in the branching oaks.

"They build better than I did," she would murmur, as she watched them at their nests.

Sometimes, when the sun was setting, she would wander along the lovely but solitary banks of the Itchen, clad always in a somber gray dress and hood, her head bent forward as if in mournful meditation, her mournful eyes fixed with a strange regard on the grassy path, oblivious of every one who passed her, unconscious that many a pitying one who knew the sad story stopped to look after her with dimmed eyes, and a sigh for the sorrow that had come to her. Sometimes she was seen, while the day was waning, seated at an upper window, her wan cheek resting upon a thin, white hand which was each day growing more attenuated, watching without interest, as she waited without hope, her gaze fixed pensively upon the distant forest, until in the failing light the pale face and drooping figure faded out of sight.

Months of this inert sorrow brought her swiftly toward death; and on a day when the rain sobbed among the trees, and the wind moaned like an afflicted spirit through the dismal house, she came out of her chamber, descended the great staircase like some stalking

ghost, entered the library, and sat down at her husband's desk to write her farewell.

When she rose to go back to her room, she held in her hand two sealed packets.

The next morning, when the sun was gilding the gables of Walraven House, and putting golden tips on the October-tinted leaves, Eleanor's maid entered the room of her mistress, and found her lying with folded hands upon her bed, completely dressed in a gray costume, with the gray hood over her head and face; and beside her on a night-stand, the two sealed packets. The girl gave a cry of terror when she saw the hands so strangely folded, and the waxen hue of the slender fingers, and the signs of preparation which are made for but one guest—the pale horseman. She fled from the chill chamber, and her cry, as she sped through the lawns, and out into the sunlit highway, and on to the town, brought a throng into the house that had never set foot there before. Among them came the kindly minister, who had never felt affronted because he was not received by the mistress of the manor, but whose passing steps had been stopped on the highway by the girl, from whose hysterical cries and broken utterances he learned that his duty would be found there, at last. But something else awaited him, a message from the mistress who lay in dumb rigidity in an upper chamber. The two packets were directed to him; and when he opened them that night in his little study, he read them aloud to his wife. And thus they ran:

"I have dressed myself for the tomb. Let no change

be made, but lay me in the stone vault at the north end of the manor. And I charge you, especially, to place me in a casket, the lid of which shall be entirely glass, thin, and transparent, and set in a frame to protect it. The casket is to be hermetically sealed. "This is my last and solemn injunction; and as you value peace and good conscience, fail not."

That was all, except her signature, which the first packet contained. The other, more lengthy, gave a diary of the events of her life, and ended with this paragraph:

"I have made my will, and it is deposited with Mr. S. R. V—, the solicitor, in Winchester. There is a legacy to go to you. Funds are also provided for my funeral expenses when I shall be no more—a moment that I impatiently await. There is also a provisional sum mentioned to defray the expense of finding my husband, and informing him of the circumstances of my death, when that shall have occurred, and giving him this, my last command, nay, the first I ever laid upon him: That he shall come to my tomb and look upon me, once only; and then consign my body to ashes."

The minister and his wife sat for an hour after reading the gloomy pages, silent and oppressed. Then he rose, and said solemnly, "I shall carry out her wishes."

"But, my dear," protested his wife, with an anxious face, fearing that he meant to go on a journey in search of the recreant, "how will you undertake to find him?"

The brows of the man of God grew dark, as he answered:

"I know where he is; I have already sent for him to come here, if he ever expects to see his insulted and wronged wife. I believe he will come, if for nothing else than to implore her to release him, which in some countries could be done."

"And do you believe," asked the wife indignantly, "that she would listen for one moment to such a shameless proposition?"

"Yes, she would listen; and I believe she at least would try to grant it."

The minister had not stayed at Walraven House after ascertaining that he could be of no assistance there; and as he left the grounds he passed the grave and slow-paced physician who had come back with Eleanor's maid. The weeping girl led the latter into the house and up to the chamber, where a dreamless sleeper lay, with the two other servants kneeling at the side of the smooth, white couch, watching the marble face with dumb anguish. The old practitioner leaned over the bed for a few moments; then he turned solemnly toward the sobbing three who had served her so well and faithfully, and said:

"My poor children, your mistress is dead!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN A SHROUD AND COWL OF GRAY—THE WRECK OF A TOMB —THE PYRE

“Bury me deep, for I fain would sleep
Till the world goes out in flame.”

—*Nydia.*

Eleanor's directions were strictly followed by the conscientious minister, who took charge of everything in accordance with her implied wish, much to the relief of the three servants, who had been left in the great house alone, with no one to direct or comfort them.

Eleanor's instructions were amplified, however, to the extent of holding church services over her; and she was accordingly borne to the foot of the altar in her strange robe and cowl of gray serge, lying white and beautiful under the glass lid of a rosewood casket. Death, indeed, had not robbed her of one jot of her beauty, but rather it had augmented, spiritualized it; under that frozen mask it almost seemed to those who looked down upon it, as if a sentient life was hid, cognizant of all that passed the black-draped bier.

Nearly every one in the parish had heard her story; the world is always busier over other's affairs than over its own; and the church was thronged by friends and strangers, who walked with bowed and reverent

heads around the dais where lay the fairest flower of Hampshire, broken, yet neither faded nor withered. The face was singularly calm, but the sweet mouth wore an expression so pathetic, so profoundly sorrowful, that men, as well as women, sobbed as they looked upon it. The gray-haired old servitor who had played with Dane Walraven's father, and had been taken back to the manor by the son, wept pitifully, as he passed the bier for a final look at the shrouded face, and moaned aloud:

"Oh, master, master, how could you do it—how could you do it!"

Ah, none but God could answer that. For never fairer bride was given to Death, never a nobler wife abandoned by man. But men have committed acts as inexplicable to themselves as to others; and it is doubtful whether Walraven could have explained the impulses which had led him to deal a blow of such brutal cruelty; which compelled him to fly like a coward, before the coming of his betrayed and trusting wife; which inspired him with the madness of a guilty passion, and drove conscience from his soul. But such dreams of bliss as he was indulging while the funeral candles burned over that flower-wreathed bier, were to be of short duration—as such dreams ever must be, because nothing but what is right can endure. And the awakening! Like the opium-eater's false paradise, *his* false elysium was girdled by a Golgotha, and when the awakening came, he would find on the one side Conscience, armed with a whip of scorpions, on the other Despair, clutching at his heart with its lean and

ghastly fingers, Disgrace behind him, Ruin in his front!

A long procession, with three humble mourners at its head, wound through the silent grounds of the manor to the shaded vault, which was to receive its second tenant. It was a square brick and stone receptacle, weed-encompassed, with three niches, in one of which were the coffined remains of Dane Walraven's mother. By the side of this, in the center niche, the most spacious of the three, the casket was deposited; and then the vault-door was closed and Eleanor Walraven was left to the only sleep, perhaps, which is painless.

For several days previous to Eleanor's obsequies, strange and hollow rumblings had issued from the ground in the vicinity of Walraven House, followed by frequent tremblings of its foundations; but the occupants were too preoccupied with the preparations for the last rites, and too absorbed by the great sorrow which had stricken them so suddenly, to take note of anything else. But some terrible, omnific force was at work under the earth, and it was soon to make itself manifest above it.

On the afternoon of the funeral, and after the people had returned to their homes, the air began to grow stagnant and oppressive, the atmosphere took on a dull, yellow cast, and fitful and brief puffs of hot wind stirred the lifeless and dying foliage, while the subterranean mutterings and earth-shudderings increased rapidly in energy and continuance. Between sunset and dusk there was a complete cessation of the

phenomena; but Nature was only gathering her awful forces for a more terrible manifestation.

Soon after dark the commotion was renewed and at nine o'clock there was an upheaval. The earth rocked as if in the throes of some awful agony! From its solid depths came louder mutterings that swelled into a roar; a thousand beasts of the forest seemed to unite in echoing groans; the rocks on the ridges were ground together, and fell apart; the waters of the river rose, and myriad froth capped waves rolled in seething torrents over the fields and meadows, while resounding thunders shook the heavens, and reverberated through the gloomy park. And then, Nature became a mighty grave-digger. The shuddering earth gaped, rent by the invisible agency below, and a hundred graves yawned wide, as if a human holocaust was at hand. A sickening smell prevailed the moaning air, trees were thrown down, the waters of the Itchen were whirled into the hovering fogs that hugged its bosom, while the darkness grew thick, impenetrable.

Then the black veil, moveless until now, was suddenly rent; bursting clouds emptied their hoard upon the quaking earth, with crackling thunders and fiery darts that sped like flaming arrows among the park trees. The winds swept through the parted air, and rode like the squadrons of Hell through lane and hollow, bearing with them the cries of affrighted and flying people, who fell upon their faces.

"God have mercy upon us! It is doomsday!"

But after that night of horror and havoc, the day came in as peacefully as ever came saint to a shrine;

and when three pallid faces looked forth from the windows of Walraven House, the air was still, the skies were clear and smiling; and Nature seemed asleep, like some mighty giant tired of his awful carnival.

A few hours later, Eleanor's maid, impelled by some unaccountable fear, crept down the path which led to the vault where her beloved mistress lay. In a few minutes she came back with flying feet, and fell at the threshold, gasping—

"Go to the vault! It is a pile of ruins!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IN LONDON—THE HOUSE IN SOUTH LAMBETH

Dane and Eugenie were in London. They had come from Paris in September, and were now domiciled in a modest little house in South Lambeth Road, near the approach to Vauxhall Bridge; a queer locality, to be sure, but selected by Walraven for the very reason that South Lambeth district would be the last place in all great London where an acquaintance of either of them would be met; and besides, in the fever and excitement of their position, they preferred isolation. Something unusual however, is always happening in the life of every human being; and with all the forethought and prevision of this self-ostracism, the "unexpected" was soon to derange their prudent plans and decide the fate of both.

The diminutive house in which they were domesticated, had been furnished with quiet elegance, and in every part of it was some proof of exquisite womanly taste, refinement, and luxurious fancy. When Eugenie's lover made a final round of the fairy like abode, he turned to his mistress with a smile of admiration lighting his blue eyes, and exclaimed:

"Eugenie, you should have been an empress, with boundless riches and territory."

"Why, darling?"

"Because you would have impressed your genius upon your realm, your times, and your people. History would have borne your name down to one generation after another as the *sine qua non* of royalty. You would have become a greater wonder than Semiramis."

"And finally," said she, shaking her head soberly, "having been such a marvel, posterity would deny that Eugenie St. Leger ever had any existence—as posterity denies the existence of Semiramis, of Homer, and other ancient people who were so unfortunate as to be great or gifted."

"Well, I at least am superlatively conscious that you *do* exist," said Dane, drawing her passionately to him.

Eugenie nestled her head against his shoulder, and raised her face toward his with that singularly alluring grace which always overpowered him.

"Do you see no one beyond me?" she whispered, while her white arm stole around his neck with a serpent-like caress.

But the answer she expected did not come. In an instant he had held her away from him, held her at arms-length, and was staring at her—no, over her shoulder, with distended eyes, with whitening face.

"What—what is it?" cried the girl, trembling with an indefinable fear.

His eyes wandered back to her scared face, a sigh like a groan escaped his lips, which were parched and open, and he drew her abruptly out of the chamber and into the little garden at the side of the house.

"Sit down here," said he, sinking into a rustic grapevine divan.

Eugenie, without taking her eyes from his, and feeling some nameless dread, slowly seated herself beside him. Her hand stole quietly into his, but he put it gently away, and folding his arms over his chest, looked gloomily off at the Thames, whose murky stream crept lazily by, and thus in silence they sat for many moments, until Eugenie's suspense became too painful to be borne longer.

"Dane," she whispered again, tremulously, "tell me, what was it?"

He turned toward her with a deepening pallor.

"Did *you* see it?" he asked, in hurried and eager tones.

Ah, Conscience, how terrible thou art, when memory becomes thine ally, and admits thee into the human soul! Thou art then at once a minister of justice and an avenger of wrong. The atheist and the infidel hate thee, the libertine curses thee, and Sin flies from thee!

"You asked me—*if I saw anything beyond you!* You asked me what I saw!" Dane continued, as she looked with dumb amazement into his eyes. "Now, I ask you what *you* saw?"

Eugenie began to comprehend—vaguely. She turned her head, with a furtive movement, and glancing over her shoulder toward the house, exclaimed:

"Dane, Dane, you are unnatural, you are haunted by something—"

"Hush!"

With a cry, he had sprung from the bench and bent toward her, terror depicted in every lineament of his

mobile face, astonishment blending with it, his hand raised warningly, as if to prevent her uttering a word it would kill him to hear.

Conscience was at work; it was raising phantoms to plague, to scare him.

"Eugenie," said he, sinking down again beside her, "I must explain all this to you; I can no longer conceal it, and it is best that you know it now, even if you take with the knowledge a part of the trouble."

"Go on, tell me all," she said in a low voice, watching his eyes anxiously.

"When Eleanor was fifteen years of age, she began to take an extraordinary interest in the study of metaphysics, which was a part of the course at the seminary she attended. Then she went on to psychology, and would spend hours of the night in pouring over the most abstruse and perplexing subjects, until her habits became almost ascetic. In a young girl, this was a most surprising condition, and to her father it was an alarming one. He forbade her reading any more works on occultism, theosophy, or psychology. But he did not succeed in eradicating from her mind the impressions it had received, nor in destroying the mysterious beliefs she entertained; they rather clung to her all the more tenaciously; and while she obeyed her father, she would constantly talk to me about her doctrines, her beliefs, and finally of her own supernaturalism

"One evening we were sitting together on the porch of her father's house in Boston, and I was telling her of a trip I contemplated to New York. 'Ah,' said she, 'that is delightful; it will give me a good opportunity to test my power.'

"‘What do you mean by your power?’ I asked, puzzled by her expression. ‘Psychic force,’ she replied gravely. ‘When you are in New York, stop at the City Tavern, where the Albany and Boston coaches used to start from. Occupy the front room over the stage office; that was the room my mother and I had before she went to the school.’

"‘And what will happen then?’ I asked, skeptically.

"‘I will sit out here on the porch,’ she answered, impressively, *‘and my other self will go to you!’*

"‘How convenient and inexpensive!’ I laughed, ‘and shall I see you?’

"‘No,’ was her answer, ‘not at first; but if I should exercise this power for a time it would grow stronger, and your apprehension would become more and more acute, until you would actually see an embodiment of myself; but you would from the very first feel my presence.’

"I left her with a jest. The next night I was in New York. I had gone to the City Tavern, an antiquated and not very comfortable place, to humor her caprice, as I termed it. Well, that night while I sat alone in my room, reading an account of our Mexican difficulties in a newspaper, I suddenly found myself staring around the room at the dingy old walls, at the two little windows, at the closed door. Shadows seemed to be stealing about the chamber, and I at length became—not conscious, but—*cognizant* of a presence, and before I even recalled what Eleanor had promised, my thoughts flew to her. I muttered to my-

self, 'Eleanor is ill—something has happened to Eleanor!' I rose up from my chair, throwing my paper on the floor, and paced the room. The stillness was impressive, the undefined shadows moved solemnly around the walls, and the candles, with their 'death's-heads' were supremely gloomy. I grew depressed, but in the very midst of my anxious speculation as to the cause of my depression, I recollected! Then a profound awe took the place of all other feeling. I sat down, and for an hour looked—at an invisible something which moved from place to place in the dim and silent chamber, until at length I felt that I was alone again.

"We hear and read of hallucinations, morbid fancies, creatures of a disordered brain. Eugenie! From invisible or unoutlined shadows the soul or *other presence* of Eleanor has been growing toward a shape, toward something palpable, ah, God, toward something visible, since I left her! She said to me on the night before our marriage:

"'The soul has the power among the few, of impelling itself forth out of the body, standing apart from it, and of returning to it. It is a power that comes to few, and to none except through severe and continuous study, discipline, and self-sacrifice.'

"To-day I felt the presence of Eleanor—nay, *more* than felt it! I have—"

What he would have revealed we know not. An elderly man, holding in his hand a small sachel, stood before him. It was the minister from Winchester.

CHAPTER XXXIX

TO DANE—A MESSAGE FROM THE TOMB

The minister, to whom Eleanor had intrusted her last message to her husband, had left Winchester on the night of the earthquake, which had not been felt north of the town. He had soon passed out of the storm, the wind having steadily driven down from the north; and he had therefore known absolutely nothing of the havoc created at Walraven House, when he reached London. There he had halted only for a few hours waiting for a train to Dover, and had pushed on to Paris, after crossing to Calais, without any intelligence whatever of the catastrophe.

The address he had in Paris was No.— Rue St. Honore; but when he arrived there, it was only to find that Mr. Walraven had gone to London, after giving up the house in which he had been living for a few weeks, and leaving no London address behind. The disappointed messenger had returned to London, where he learned, to his dismay, through a newspaper, that "the Walraven vault had been totally demolished, and the inmates buried under a heap of ruins; that a fire, caused by lightning, had burned a channel through the debris, and consumed the bodies as well as the coffins!"

Horried by this intelligence, he had immediately started home by the Southwestern railway, which

passes along the east bank of the River Thames through South Lambeth as far as the little depot in Wandsworth Road. While looking out of a coach window, the train crossed Lambeth Road within fifty yards of the house where Dane and Eugenie sat, oblivious of the eyes that were gazing in amazement at them from the car-window.

The minister uttered an exclamation, which fairly startled every one of the three strangers who shared the compartment with him, and seizing his bag, hurried to the door, at the moment the train drew up at the station, and sprang from the car.

When he stood before the two astonished fugitives, neither he nor they uttered a word for a full half minute. Then Dane rose, and with his face scarlet for the moment, managed to speak—

"You have come here to see me?"

"Yes, you," returned the unwelcome apparition, with terrible sternness.

"Will you sit down, or come into the house?" stammered the husband—as he yet thought himself; for reading no newspapers, and voluntarily cut off from the world as much as his buried wife, he as yet knew nothing of the fact which the minister was about to communicate to him with terrible, merciless directness.

At the invitation to enter the house the clergyman's own face flushed darkly.

"In there?" exclaimed he, with half-repressed scorn, "certainly not!"

Touched to the quick, humiliated, bitterly angry, Dane instantly demanded:

"Then you will please state your business with me."

"That I intend to do, sir."

And without any thing or word to prepare him for the frightful truth, the unhappy man listened to it; while the woman who had been the cause of it all, sat crouching in a corner of the garden-seat, hiding her white face, panting for breath.

The story at length was told; all the details had been given unsparingly, eloquently; the lonely life for dragging months in the deserted home, the blight *his* hand had laid upon her fair young head, her sweet and holy resignation, while her innocent heart was breaking—slowly breaking; the costume in which she clothed herself on the last day that rose between her and peace, the peace of the tomb; her message to him, to come to the burial-vault where she lay in her gray robe; her cowed face, with its mournful lips, looking upward through the glass lid of her coffin at him—him, the murderer of his wife; of the tempest, and the earthquake in the night of her sepulture, robbing even her tomb of the pitiful peace she had sought within its icy depths; and, ah, climax of horror—of the lightning's torches hurled among the ruins, the kindled pyre, her fair body consumed by the creeping flames!—

God! What horrors were these? Who was this towering Nemesis who stood over him, with his gray hair uncovered and streaming in the dank twilight air, whose shaking hand, now flung aloft, now stretched forth, seemed to fling upon him denunciations, to drop upon it curses which only his holy calling forbade him uttering?

Thrice the stricken husband held up his own trembling hand and groaned in agony:

"No more, no more, in mercy cease!"

But the clergyman was for that terrible moment a man—and nothing more:—

("You appeal in the name of mercy!" he thundered, his sunken eyes darting their withering lights upon the cowering figure; "well, take such mercy as you gave—but take it from the God you have offended! In me you see only the messenger of your dead wife, of the woman who trusted you, who followed you across the sea without fear and without doubt that *you* would shield her from ill, that *your* arm would protect her, that *your* love would comfort her, the orphan, the wife, even in a strange land! Yet it was *you* who deserted her, it was *you* who delivered her up to disgrace and death, it was *you* who lured her from her father's tomb in her own land to her own tomb in a foreign one, whose 'love' was as evanescent as a sun-beam, *you* who—killed her! Oh, man, man, how *could* you!")

And then the old man strode from the garden without one backward glance; deaf to the frightful cry as the reeling form fell headlong upon the turf behind him, to the woman's shriek that followed that fall of her guilty idol, deaf to the pitiful sounds that pursued him.

The messenger of the dead had done his work; and as he passed on toward the river, the night descended suddenly, and hid under its sable garments a scene of woe, of despair, at once unspeakable, horrible.

CHAPTER XL

THE PARTING OF DANE AND EUGENIE

"I only know that now I crave
The silence that protects the grave,
Its solitude, its holy peace;
Within that sanctuary cease
All conflicts born of—Conscience."

—*The Conspirators.*

"Dane, do you feel sure that it is not remorse preying upon you? You are not naturally superstitious, and you cannot believe that the dead return! Believe me, it is remorse, Dane. I know it—I feel it myself, terrible, poignant, awful remorse."

"What? You regret?"

"Yes—ah, God, if I had never met you!"

The round white arms were flung upon the table in front of her, the white face was pressed upon them, and sobs convulsed the white throat.

"Eugenie!"

There was no passion, no love, breathed in the word, nothing but mournful compassion.

She raised her head, and her look was that of a woman without hope, but whose awful misery was an expiation. *His* face was a reflection of hers; on the features of both was the stamp of an intolerable grief. Some goodness, I verily believe, lies embedded in the worst or meanest human heart, only waiting for the sun of charity and kindness to smile upon the un-

inviting soil, to spring forth and bloom all the more beautiful because all around is barren.

In the heart of this woman there was a germ of goodness. It was struggling up to the light, it was about to bloom into an act of heroism; she was about to offer up to duty a sacrifice, an atonement to the dead, reparation to the living. A terrible struggle silently waged between her superhuman will and her unconquerable love—for she loved this man almost to madness—had ended in the determination to make this heroic sacrifice of—herself. The moment was at hand, the hour of atonement had come, and Duty, that inexorable guide for whom the only beacon is Justice, was leading her at the eleventh hour.

We, who know that in the awful breach, where wounds, and death, and the slow pain of dying under the pitiless steel may end the charge, see glory beyond the sacrifice, the praise of men, the reward of bravery. But, to yield up all that is left of life, and go down into eternal night without honor, stabbed by the world's sole comment—"She could do no less!"

((The greatest sacrifices, the most sublime heroism, the fondest devotion, the noblest fortitude throughout all human history must be accredited to woman.))

To Eugenie St. Leger, the sacrifice she was making involved everything except life—in *itself* worth nothing to any one possessing a soul.

The story told them by the minister had left Dane for hours in a condition of stupor, after the paroxysm in the garden, and he had been carried into the house by some passing boatmen, and laid in an unconscious

state upon his bed. Eugenie, the only intelligent witness of his agony, had suffered almost as much as he, but the anguish she felt was for him; and when that night she knelt at the side of his couch where he lay moaning in intermittent delirium, she cried out in the bitterness of repentance:

"Oh, my love, my love, what have I done to you!"

The next morning he was calmer, but numbed by the appalling misery at his heart. He ate no breakfast, but walked his room incessantly during the entire day, except when at intervals exhaustion forced him to fling himself upon his face, only to start up again with a groan, and resume the monotonous tread back and forth. When the night came, Eugenie succeeded in coaxing him downstairs and into the dining-room, where he mechanically drank some tea, and chewed bits of dried bread, the first food that had passed his lips since the previous day at dinner. She herself had neglected to eat until she tottered from faintness; her strong will had borne her up, and her mind had been busy during the long night, and through the miserable hours that followed it, in determining her own course. For she felt now an intolerable anger against herself, and a feverish, almost a fierce eagerness to sacrifice herself for him—the only one of earth's children for whom she cared a jot. She must go away from him, or he from her, and the parting must be soon. She would have stolen away from the house and left him without a word of farewell, terrible as that would have been to her feelings; but he was prostrated, bewildered by his shock, and it would not have been safe to leave

him. When the evening came, however, she determined to inform him of her purpose, and she had drawn him into the small parlor where no one would intrude upon them, or witness the agony she knew would betray itself in her face, at least.

It was here, seated at a table on which were a few favorite books, that she had begun the hard task she had set herself.

Dane's exclamation had relieved her of the dread she had felt of his anger—for she expected him to be angry; forgetting that for the time being, at least, he also was without hope, that the shock which had made her sensibilities more acute had dulled his.

She looked long into his face before she spoke again, and the haggard features, the mournful eyes would have strengthened her resolution, had she thought of wavering.

"Dane," she began, clinching her hands together in the folds of her dress, where he could not see them, "it is remorse which is haunting you, not a phantom; it is the same terrible regret weighing upon your spirit as upon mine; and we can find relief but in one way."

"Ah, Eugenie, is there a way?"

The question was asked apathetically; he had no hope, he expected no help.

"There is but one," she answered, her voice hardening in the struggle within her. "We must part."

"Part?" he repeated, fixing his eyes upon her face, which was pallid, but emotionless.

"It is now seven o'clock. At nine I shall depart from here—forever."

She was speaking slowly, in a hard monotone, and he would have said, with cold deliberation, had he been capable at the moment of reflection.

"You wish to leave me?" he queried, wonderingly.

"I *must* leave you; it is decided."

"And where would you go?"

"To Paris."

He started, and looked at her with sudden earnestness.

"And why do you go there?"

"To enter a convent," she answered, in the same hard monotone.

"A convent!" he exclaimed, catching his breath, as if it were leaving him. "Horrible!"

"It is decided. A little while there, and then—Montparnasse."

"Oh, God," he moaned, his head sinking upon his breast, "is there nothing left but that!"

"Nothing—for me. For *you*—"

She did not finish the thought, but looked at him pensively, her face softening, her undiminished beauty hallowed by that look which is seen upon the human face so seldom, and only at the moment of self-abnegation unconditional, terrible, absolute.

For a time, there was no word spoken by either of them. Profound dejection showed in every line of the man's face, in every angle of his body, in his restless and wandering glances. The pathos of a sublime resignation, the composure born of utter hopelessness, the shadow of a grief too profound for any human expression, but over all—the illumination of a soul re-

deeming itself by one mighty sacrifice, that another soul might not be lost—shone out through the deepening shadows from the still, white face of the woman.

"Only one more hour," she said, at last, speaking softly.

Danè raised his head with a restless movement. "It is a very short time," said he, broodingly.

"It is frightfully brief, and it is still too long!" she returned, solemnly; but he did not understand. He was wondering what he should do after she had left him. But she had decided for him.

"Dane," she said, "you must take a journey; a quiet voyage on the Mediterranean, where there will be entire change from your old life, nothing to remind you of anything in the past—which you must strive to forget. You have grown excessively morbid, your mind is preying upon your body, and will destroy both, if you continue to indulge these moods much longer. Promise me you will do this at once."

"I will—to please you," he answered, apathetically.

"You will, because it is your duty to do it," returned Eugenie, firmly. "Find peace, and you will regain hope."

He shook his head. Hopeless, he said nothing, offered no argument for himself or her, made no protest against her going, because he knew it was right she should go, that they must see each other never again, if they valued anything beyond life. They had sat in judgment on themselves, and had not spared; and the decree was—expiation.

"It is nearly time for me to go, Dane," said Eu-

genie, after another long silence, "you will go with me to the station?"

"Of course," he answered, nervously.

"And to-morrow you will dispose of the house and everything in it, to a dealer?"

"Yes."

"Then you must not sleep here again, you must go to some hotel in the city to-night, and take an apartment for the time you remain. And now, I want you to go direct to Genoa—where you so much desired to go when you were first in Europe. There can be nothing there to remind you of any later circumstances. And while you are there, you will receive one and *but* one letter from me, which you will read alone. Look for it, it will reconcile you to our parting," she concluded, with a momentary tone of bitterness. "That is all—except our parting, and that will be at the station, in public. Are you ready?"

"Yes—yes," he murmured, as if groping.

"Come, then."

And together for the last time, they went out into the night.

CHAPTER XLI

THE STORY OF EUGENIE ST. LEGER

“Men are but playthings in the hands of Fate;
Their passions—leading strings, their puny hate—
A whip to lash them with, their loves unlawful—
Meshes ensnaring them.” —*Fair Felix.*

In a sumptuous chamber in the Hotel de la Ville, Genoa, an hour before sunset, a solitary figure filled the open casement looking out upon the blue Mediterranean.

Gay feluccas were skimming the trembling waters and bathing in the golden drops distilled by the western sun, as one by one, or in pairs, they coasted up from Nice. The softly tempered air brought fitful notes of a barcarole to the listless ear, the friendly sun glinted the yellow lock that drooped over the bowed forehead, and a Florentine girl of dark and splendid beauty coquetted in her two oared shell in the track of the sunniest waves, flashing upon the young Anglese now coaxing and now disdainful glances, without one look in return.

There could be no mistaking that drooping figure at the casement; for Dane Walraven had lost none of his manly beauty, although his face had now a settled pallor, his blue eyes an habitual expression as of one who is conscious of being constantly followed, secretly, stealthily, remorselessly, by something unseen and yet an embodiment.

He had come to Genoa, as he had promised Eugenie and without a purpose except to obey her. Upon his arrival, an hour before he sat down at the window, he had sent for Paris and London mail, and a letter had been brought to him—from Eugenie. It was bulky; and as he looked at it without breaking the seals—three lavender-colored seals with a curious monogram, he felt an inexpressible dread of it. For a few moments he was unnerved.

He had laid the packet down upon his table, and seated himself at the window, astonished at the feeling which disturbed him, for which he could not account, but which seemed to presage new calamities.

"Coward, coward," he muttered, propping his chin with his clenched hand, "every shadow startles me, every noise alarms me! And still—there is some influence directing my life which is as incomprehensible as it is terrible—yes, terrible!"

His face grew a shade paler as he uttered the last words, and he glanced furtively around the chamber, until his wandering gaze rested upon the sealed letter.

"I will read it directly," he said, as if apologizing to the absent writer. "Yes, directly. I wonder what it is all about? It was not necessary to write anything, all was settled. And, as for what was past—is it not printed in characters of fire upon my memory, the horrible accusation which drove peace out of my heart forever—Dane Walraven, the uxoricide! Ay, the wife-murderer! I must teach myself to hear the accursed words, because they have less terror for me in the sound than in the thought—they astound, petrify me, when I speak them!"

The sun had sunk when he picked up the letter from Eugenie, closed the casement through which the evening breeze came chill and moist, lighted the gilt candelabrum over the table, and slowly broke the seals, murmuring, as he did so, in a strangely absent way:

"Poor Eugenie. Poor child. She a nun. It is horrible. She will die—perhaps that is best. I would save her, if I could. But I can do nothing—nothing. It is all over."

He spread the neatly written sheets on the table, and began to read. Not a word escaped him until he had read to the very end; but his actions while he pursued his task were singular, his look startling, and when he lifted his head, he appeared like one stricken with madness. His hands clasped themselves across his forehead, his lips were drawn back, his eyes were hollow and staring. He had risen now from his chair and for a moment stood erect; then, with a laugh that would have chilled one's marrow, low, bitter, frightful, he fell to the floor.

An attendant found him there at midnight, attracted by the light which still streamed out of his chamber through the crevices around the door. A physician was summoned, and he pronounced it a "case of catalepsy." Professional curiosity led him to read the letter lying on the table, which evidently had something to do with the attack, and when he had finished it, he sent for a clerical friend, an American, to come at once to the hotel.

"A little religious consolation," said the doctor to himself, as he folded the letter carefully, and placed

it in the waistcoat pocket of the unconscious patient lying on the bed, "decidedly, a little religious consolation will be of benefit to this young American. Ah, women have so much to answer for—they're always in it, always!"

And, as usual, the *man* escaped sentence.

The letter from Eugenie was a revelation calculated to unsettle the brain of anyone in Walraven's condition. It was a brief but startling history of her life prior to the fatal coming to Walraven House, and was in substance as follows:

Her mother was Sarah Crouch!

Eugenie was the child bequeathed by her dying mother to Mr. St. Leger, the amiable minister who called at the prison so often to see the unfortunate woman.

The packet left by the latter, received by the minister, and deposited in a bank at Carlisle, was sacredly held for Eugenie, and delivered to her by the banker on her twenty-first birthday, no one, not even the clergyman who had adopted her into his family, having any knowledge whatever of the contents.

Mr. St. Leger had given the girl a liberal education, he himself being a man of rare erudition, a student, and a philanthropist. On her twenty first birthday Eugenie was an accomplished, educated, and beautiful woman—and a poor one. The only son of her benefactor, a young man only one year her senior, had long indulged a passionate but hopeless love for his lovely little companion, and when he was told by a London physician that he was a victim of quick consumption,

and would not live a twelvemonth longer, Eugenie yielded, from pity for the handsome youth, and from gratitude to his father, to the unfortunate lover's entreaties and they were married. They went abroad, remaining in Italy until the death of her husband—fourteen months after the marriage—and then she returned to Carlisle.

Two days later, she was in possession of the mysterious packet, the contents of which astounded her.

Her mother had purloined the Walraven jewels, had secreted them on the same night in the cleft of one of the stones which lined the well at the Royal Inn, and the letter gave minute directions to the daughter how to find the casket. The concluding lines were:

"And now, my beloved daughter, my poor little one, I have given my character, my life, maybe my soul, to make you rich. Take care of your riches! Take the stones to Paris, find a dealer there, and sell them to him. They are worth twelve thousand pounds; I heard Mr. Walraven say so. He is rich, and has no children, and his wife has sent me to my death because of them. Keep the money you get for them, and be happy. If you give it up my curse will rest upon you!"

Eugenie had followed her mother's instructions, had gone to Paris, sold the gems, and received forty-five thousand five-franc notes for them. Her bankers in London, recommended to her by a Paris house, had placed it for her, and she had lived on the income. The principal was unimpaired; and she had made arrangements with the bank, before leaving London, to

place it to *his* credit — Dane's — in restitution. He was not to understand that she was in want. She had arranged to take the veil; and this was her farewell. She had hated his name when she had first heard it, and had gone to Walraven House with the determination to destroy his home. She had succeeded; but at a fearful cost to herself. Her hate had swiftly turned to love, unreasoning, unconquerable, deathless. All that she could do had now been done, to retrieve her past; and to-morrow she would enter the walls of the Convent of * * * *, without hope, but with a heart at peace with the world she was leaving.

"Forget me, Dane," she concluded. "Rouse yourself and look around for opportunities to be a useful man; there are so many such opportunities in this hard world, and to be useful to others is surely to secure the greatest amount of happiness attainable in this life."

It was some days before Dane was conscious of his surroundings; and when he finally opened his eyes, they rested upon a face he knew.

It was the face of the Reverend Ebenezer Doolittle.

CHAPTER XLII

MISS AGNES BLOUNT AND HER "ORIGINAL"

The very spirited acquaintance begun in the street, between the daughter of the "forty-niner" and the evangelist, had been briskly cultivated by the latter, and—for her own amusement—encouraged by the former. They had become exceedingly good friends, and the habitués of the "George" delighted in seeing them together, and in listening to the refreshingly naive expressions of the handsome young lady, who paid not the slightest attention to her grinning admirers. Mr. Doolittle had developed a spirit of gallantry which it seemed to be the constant purpose of his "chum" to impose upon. She virtually led him by the nose, sending him back to Walraven House, while he remained there, upon the smallest pretext when she wanted him to "light out," as she elegantly put it, using him as an errand boy, taking him along with her upon break-neck excursions over the downs, and generally using him up by the time she dragged him back to the inn.

When Miss Agnes and her father were ready to leave Carlisle, that domineering young person told her indulgent parent that she wished him to invite the Reverend Ebenezer Doolittle to join them, as they were about to start for the Continent, and "a parson was a good thing to have along."

"How so?" asked the colonel, doubtfully.

"Why to keep you straight, pop," she frankly explained, "and besides, he's a handy sort of chap; he's delightfully chummy, and can't make love to me."

"But - can you dispose of him without his consent? I know you have a mountain of—of—"

"Cheek? Certainly. Well?"

"H'm, I mean assurance, of course; but, suppose the parson won't go, or can't go?"

Miss Agnes, who had been looking out of one of the dingy windows in the parlor, suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh there he is, now. Wait, and I'll settle the question instanter," and she had shot out of the room before the colonel fairly caught her meaning.

"Zounds," he growled to himself, as he heard her returning, "I don't know what to do with that girl; I can't curb her. Lucky she's good gold, or her spirit would break things—"

"Say, pop!" cried the young lady, dragging the beaming Ebenezer into the room in a most uncere-
monious style, "here's the tender foot himself. Now, you ask him."

The colonel was a raw-boned, tall, and rugged man, who had learned in the far west to come to the point with startling brevity.

"Parson," said he, squaring himself before the "roly-poly" figure of the latter, and diving his hands deep into his breeches pockets, "my daughter Ag, here, says you're a bonanza for fun, and she wants you to travel with us to keep the blues away from her. We're bound overland for the Continent, as it's called,

and we start to-morrow morning at chicken-crow. Will you join us?"

The parson was greatly surprised by this invitation, but inwardly delighted. There was really nothing to prevent him, he had no ties anywhere, no engagements; and he had already looked ruefully forward to the departure of his tyrannical monitress. So, after a moment's reflection, he said, turning toward her with a comical duck of his shining head—for the parson was very bald:

"Verily, where thou goest, I will go."

"Good enough! Put it there, Dolly!" cried she, extending a slender hand which he heartily grasped. "Now, run back to the manor, say good-bye, pack up your traps, and come here to-night, so that you'll be on deck in the morning by candle-light. Put!"

The next morning saw the three odd travelers on their way to London, from whence they went to Paris, thence to Marseilles, then to Nice, and—a week before Dane's arrival—they were in Genoa. Here the evangelist fell in with an English physician whose acquaintance he had made in London, and who had gone there from his adopted city, Genoa, on a brief visit, and the two men, very unlike each other, had nevertheless renewed their short acquaintance with mutual pleasure.

And thus it came about that Mr. Doolittle appeared in Dane's sick chamber.

At the first sight of him, Dane had uttered a groan, his mind instantly reverting to the scenes at Walraven House in which the preacher had borne a part, before the ruin was consummated.

But Mr. Doolittle, who had heard with dismay all the miserable details of the story, besides a brief outline of Dane's subsequent "affair" from the physician, had cheerfully come to him, determined to do whatever lay in his power to divert the mind of his former host from its troubles; and his efforts were soon rewarded. Whatever the reverend gentleman's eccentricities might be, he was at least a man of warm impulses, and overflowed with jollity, and Dane found himself smiling at some of his droll speeches and comical actions before the day was over.

At the end of a week, Miss Agnes had become tired of Genoa, and had said to her father, as they came out of the wonderful Brignole Sala one morning:

"Let's vamosé!"

The colonel had agreed, and Ebenezer was informed that:

"Genoa's played out, Dolly. We're going to Florence. Tell your friend with the dumps by-by, to-night, because we shall peg out for Leghorn by the funny little boat you saw bobbing around in the harbor this morning."

Mr. Doolittle, or "Dolly," as his chum euphonistically called him when she was in a good humor with him and everything else, looked grave.

"What's on your mind? Haven't been soft on one of those gypsy-looking girls in theater dress I saw you staring at this morning, hey? Don't get spooney, Dolly, or I'll drop you."

But Dolly disclaimed any such worldly weakness. "I was thinking of my poor friend," said he, with an honest sigh.

"Oh, that Mr. Walraven Well, what's the matter with him? The doctor said he was all right again, if he'd only brace up. However, although he's a real pretty fellow, I haven't as much sympathy for him as would save a claim-jumper from a lasso!"

"Refrain, my dear friend," remonstrated her companion, "judge not, lest ye be judged."

"Oh, don't spout Scripture over me—about this case. Didn't he deliberately skip, and leave his wife without even ta-ta?"

"Truly, he stood not on the order of his going," responded Ebenezer, sorrowfully.

"And didn't he take up with a nobody from nowhere?"

"She was of marvellous charm," murmured he, thinking to excuse—just a little—his friend's sad error.

"Charm!" Miss Blount's head was tossed disdainfully, her brilliant eyes scintillated with the indignation she felt.

"Verily, she was exceedingly beautiful," persisted "Dolly," very humbly, however.

"Oh, doubtless; but you and I saw one more so, at the Zoo in Paris."

"I do not recollect," observed he, trying to remember.

"Oh, yes, you do; it was the cobra."

Mr. Doolittle was silenced. But he still bethought him of Dane, to whom he was fast becoming attached, whom he feared to leave for awhile yet, at least.

"Well," exclaimed Miss Agnes, reading his thoughts, "you can take him along; he's so mopy he won't bother us much with his company."

"Thanks, my dear friend, thanks," returned Ebenezer, much relieved; "I'll just see if he will accompany us," and he was off at once, his "chum" watching him as he waddled along the terrace with a dry smile on her fine face.

"Maybe, after all," she mused, "it will be doing some good. The man acts, and *looks*, as though he was haunted!"

CHAPTER XLIII

THE WOMAN IN A SHROUD OF GRAY

“I could swear
That gown’d intruder sought me here,
Well flesh’d, and was no shadow.”

—*The Conspirators.*

Four persons were walking in the Boboli Gardens, in the city of Florence.

It was a glorious afternoon, such a one as Florence often yields; when the sky is cloudless, and the incomparable air is stirred by the breeze from the distant Adriatic. The atmosphere was iridescent, the thousand scents that mingled with its breath were intoxicating as the juice of poppies.

Dane Walraven was one of the four who wandered through the maze of foliage, statuary, and miniature specimens of the architecture of the dead republic. He had been easily induced to go with his new friends—they were all three his friends now; his pale face, his hopeless apathy, his look of contrite sorrow, his gentle manners, had impressed even Miss Agnes, who had at first been so prejudiced against him.

“He can be made over,” was her curious decision, after the first meeting with him on the Leghorn boat; and she had concluded, with her usual energy, to attempt this charlatanism at once.

They had been two days in Florence; and a chang-

ing color, a brighter eye, and a faint interest in his surroundings, had encouraged Agnes to believe in her powers of rejuvenation in very earnest. Dane had shown a quiet gratitude to the fair girl for her little attentions, for the interest she so ingenuously manifested in him, for the efforts she constantly put forth in a hundred charming and disinterested ways, to divert his mind from its dark musings. But the Reverend Mr. Doolittle was inclined to complain of this new occupation at first, and Agnes found it necessary to reprimand him in her own characteristic fashion.

"You are becoming worldly, Aggie," said he, reproachfully, as the two walked down to the shore behind her father and Dane.

"See here, Eb," retorted the spirited young "49er," "I am playing nurse, and if you interfere with my plans, I will lasso you. If you were going about with a long face, and groaning like a sick buffalo, I would tie your head up in your red bandanna, and give you bran-mash. But Mr. Walraven requires another kind of treatment. He has a diseased mind of another color; and nothing less or weaker than an all round circus will answer, or fit his case. Now subside."

And the reverend gentleman did subside. He soon began to comprehend, moreover, that the good Samaritan was really needed, and obeying the promptings of a good heart, he entered warmly into Agnes' little schemes for the rehabilitation of his pale friend, and was duly rewarded by that young lady's approbation.

There were so many marvelous beauties to be seen and exclaimed over, in the wonderful Boboli Gardens,

that twilight had fairly stolen a march upon the loiterers before they recollected that they were to have seen the house of Dante, Via S. Martino, before dusk.

The colonel suddenly reminded the others of the lateness of the hour.

"We must go at once," said he, turning about, "or they will not admit us to-night; and we are going to Naples to-morrow morning, you know."

"Well, come on," cried Agnes, leading, "we can indulge in a dog trot here, there are no spectators of Dolly's paraboles;" and she proceeded to demonstrate the fleetness of her own slender feet, by skurrying along the darkening path, while the preacher waddled ludicrously after her, stopping very soon, however, and calling after her to wait for him.

"Wait for you? What for?" returned she, without pausing.

"Because—because—I'm short—of wind," explained he, gasping between the words.

But only a merry laugh answered him, supplemented by a little chaff:

"Think of one of your sermons, Dolly."

For awhile longer he bravely persisted in the useless endeavor to keep pace with his "trainer."

The colonel had taken a short cut through the shrubbery, and was already doing well with his long stride. Dane was the last to follow; his thoughts were astray, his step slow, and soon he saw no more of his companions, and heard nothing except the clear notes of the girl's voice as it floated back to him.

Suddenly he stopped—stopped as if all motion had

been shocked out of him. He was at the moment passing among a labyrinth of luxurious trees, tall and interlacing shrubs, surrounding a water-grotto, when, glancing into the depths of a recess on his right, into the mouth of which the rising moon-rays were stealing, he saw the outlines of a woman's form

A woman in gray, her long robe clinging to her tall and majestic figure, her head and part of her face concealed by a gray hood or cowl. Still as one of the white statues around her, her eyes, large and inexpressibly mournful, directed toward him, her cheeks pallid as the moonbeams that rested upon them, she stood peering out at him, a voiceless phantom.

The portly preacher had sat down on a marble slab at a little distance further on, very much out of breath, and unpleasantly warm. He intended to wait for Dane to come up, and then to propose that they two should return to the hotel, as it would certainly be too late now to obtain admission to the poet's house in Martino Way.

"It will teach that spoiled child of the—the plains," he mused aloud, "not to expect me to surrender *every* atom of my dignity. She shall find me calmly seated in an easy-chair, when she returns heated and tired and fretful, and the levity of—of youth will be abashed."

But the speculations of the preacher were not to "materialize." In the midst of his reflections there came, from the direction of the water-grotto, a cry of such despair, such wildness, such agony, as to hold him frozen to the stone on which he sat. The voice

was like and yet unlike that of Dane Walraven, and it came straight down the path he himself had but a few moments ago hurried along, followed by the fanning breeze. He listened; but there was no repetition of the cry, no sound of hurrying footsteps, nothing save the rustle of the leaves, the faint sigh of the wind as it wandered through the branches of shadowy trees.

"It *must* have been Walraven!" whispered the awed listener to himself. He strained his eyes in the direction of the grotto, but could see no one approaching.

No one?

Even while he looked, he saw the dim outlines of a gray-robed figure, with a gray cowl muffling chin and brow, gliding across the path and disappearing in the dense shrubbery not a dozen yards from him.

"A woman!" exclaimed he, starting up from the stone base, and peering after the vanished mystery. "But that was not a woman's voice; it was, it must have been Walraven's!"

As the preacher hastened along the canopied walk, with eye and ear alert, he called aloud to his friend, and was repeating Dane's name when he came to the spot where the latter had halted.

Then it was his own cry that rose upon the night air, a cry of dismay.

Prone in the path at his feet lay the form of his friend, with the face downward, pressing the earth with open palms, inanimate and limp.

Bending over it, the preacher tried to raise it up by the shoulders; but Dane Walraven was a large man, and he only succeeded in turning the body over, so

that he could see the face. Then he uttered another cry, a cry of distress.

The moonlight revealed a countenance as pallid as the face of death itself, though with none of death's calm and passionless expression in the distorted features; the eyes were wide open and staring, the open mouth was ghastly; horror and terror were stamped upon the cold face.

Trembling with fear of he knew not what, but with no thought of flying, the preacher vainly called upon the stricken man to rouse himself. He took the cold and outspread hands in his and slapped them together, seized the drooping head and shook it, but to no purpose. It seemed indeed as if the spirit of Dane Walraven was at last at peace.

But now, in the moment of his perplexity, he heard approaching footsteps, then a voice, and—

"The Lord be praised, it is Aggie!" ejaculated he gratefully.

"Dolly, you old humbug, where are you?"

"Here, here!" shouted he, his frozen tongue almost refusing its office.

"Why—what in the name of Kismet is all this?" cried the girl, springing toward the strange scene.

Mr. Doolittle stammered out all the explanation he could give.

"Well," declared Agnes, gravely, "these are funny happenings, and there's something behind them all, you can bank on that. I'll find them out, too. But—why *do* you stand here staring like a dead Injin, stupid? Here, pop," to the colonel, who had just come up,

"run and dip some of that water out of the pool there—in your hat; hurry up."

The colonel, not being an emotional man, had glanced down at the group without "making remarks," and he now obeyed his daughter, or "the major," as he was in the habit of calling her at home, throwing a liberal shower upon Dane's face, which soon brought him out of his swoon. It was several minutes, however, before he was able to get upon his feet, or to stand upon them without support from the colonel's arm. When he walked forth from the moonlit gardens his steps were slow and uncertain; and not until he had passed into the open street did he raise his head from his breast and look about him, suspiciously, fearfully.

With one of his friends on either side, holding an arm, he reached the hotel in silence, and sat down on the cool piazza, with the manner of a somnambulist.

There they left him for awhile, going off to consult about his condition, which indeed alarmed them. But Agnes remained. She seated herself near his chair, narrowly scrutinizing his death-like features. As his eyes turned toward hers for an instant, she asked him, with a trace of emotion in her voice:

"What was it?"

A terrible expression passed like a shadow over his wan face, he shuddered violently, and answered, in shaking tones:

"I saw my wife!"

CHAPTER XLIV

VESUVIUS, AND THE BAY OF NAPLES

"She sat beneath the yellow awn,
Watching the scene with eye of fawn;
Her oval face, with varying tints,
Turned tow'rd the sea!" —*Fair Felix.*

The morning following the mysterious scenes in the Boboli Gardens found Dane Walraven in too prostrated a condition to journey, or indeed to leave his chamber. His friends of course had no notion of leaving him in such a state; and the little council of three, called by Agnes, decided to call a physician at once, and this was accordingly done.

The physician, an Englishman, administered a nerve to the patient, sent the evangelist in to divert him and reported to "the major."

"How soon will he be able to move on, doctor?" inquired the young lady.

"In two days I think we shall see him sufficiently recovered from the nervous shock to 'move on,' under your espionage," was the smiling reply.

"Well, what do you call his complaint?"

"He is impressed with the belief that his wife's spirit has taken shape and is following him," answered the doctor, gravely.

"So it appears," observed the matter-of-fact Miss

Blount, "He said last night that he saw her—in the Boboli, you know."

"So my friend Doolittle informs me."

"Well, his wife was cremated, so it is not probable there was enough material left to make a shape out of, is it?"

"Scarcely; but the mind constructs wonderful fabrics and figures out of the impalpable."

"That's so. It's a disease, isn't it?"

"Y-es," admitted the practitioner, with queer hesitation for so matter-of-fact an appearing person.

"What do you call it?"

"I really can give it no positive definition. There are hallucinations, as you are aware, to which highly sensitive organizations are not unfrequently subject, as also are persons of abnormal habits. But here is a man of splendid bodily powers, with no organic disease, no derangement of the bodily functions to superinduce or cause such idiosyncrasies; and yet who persists in believing the most extraordinary things, and who is overcome—without warning—by what he calls visitations from the dead!"

"It's a queer case, that's a fact," assented Agnes, demurely; "and I really think, after you leave him, *we* shall have to be his doctors."

"You could do very much, I am sure," observed the physician, glancing at her bright, fair face and graceful figure.

"I say, Dolly," exclaimed she, utterly impervious to compliment, "can't you exorcise the demon, or whatever it is? It's right in your line—old humbug."

"Alas," returned Dolly, who with half-closed eyes was lazily puffing from a long church warden, "it is not an ordinary devil that afflicts our brother, you see; it is a beautiful spirit of whose presence he complains and the Scriptures have not provided for such an anomalous case. Besides," with a sigh, "in this age of unbelief, Apollyon and his myrmidons take upon themselves so many forms, many of them alluring to the carnal eye of man, that we of the sacred cloth cannot, like the prophets of old, protect our people from their assaults."

"Humph," rejoined Miss Agnes, contemptuously, "well, I have a plan for the boy's cure."

"Propound it, oh, daughter of Heth," purred the placid smoker

"We'll keep him with us, keep him going, keep him busy, and keep him tired."

"Excellent! Tonic, regimen, exercise, diversion," was the physician's comment, as he departed.

"Does your friend ride?" asked Agnes, full of her idea.

"Like a centaur," replied Dolly.

"Good enough! You don't; you never would have done for old Kentuck, Eb, old boy."

"Ah, my beloved sister," retorted Eb, reproachfully, "I have devoted myself to the service of the Lord, not to the ring-master."

"Pity you didn't; you would have made such a jolly tumbler!"

This irreverent speech received no notice from Mr. Doolittle except a gentle sigh; and failing to rouse

him, Miss Blount left him to his pipe and his nap, and posted off to consult "pop" concerning the treatment she proposed to adopt in Mr. Walraven's strange case.

That night, Dane went to his friend's room.

"Let us leave here to-morrow," said he, feverishly.

He was haggard and wan; and as he sank into a chair, the preacher observed that he drew his breath painfully, his eyes wandered nervously about the chamber, and there was a covert excitement in his manner distressingly apparent.

"But you are not yet well enough to travel," objected the preacher.

"Nevertheless, I must leave here, or I shall be still worse," replied Walraven, with a shudder. "It is impossible for me to remain here more than one night; I could not endure it."

"Very well, we have only delayed on your account. We will start in the morning, for Naples or Rome."

"I care not," returned the sufferer, wearily, "only let us go away."

They departed next day, not stopping at Rome, but proceeding first to Naples, where they secured apartments in a hotel with windows and piazza overlooking the bay.

Within two hours after dinner, the enterprising little "49er" had bargained for a gondola, and insisted upon having a moonlight ride on the water famed for its placid beauty.

There could be no reasonable objection to so delightful an excursion, and none was offered. Even Walraven stirred with some show of interest when

they went down to the smooth beach, and looked out dreamily over the wonderful expanse of molten silver which sent its murmuring ripples to his feet.

On that particular night, indeed, the bay was magnificent. Its bosom trembled under the soft caresses of the coast wind that brought with it the perfumes of Palermo and Messina; it gave back the thousand lights reflected in its clear depths from the gayly awned boats that moved hither and thither in every direction in picturesque confusion.

Mr. Doolittle had been placed by the side of the colonel, while Agnes had seated herself at the stern with Dane. Her vivacity of manner and piquant exclamations soon drew him out of himself, at least as far as it was possible for him to banish the oppression which had so long weighed upon him. He loved the beautiful too well not to be fascinated by the scene around him; while his social disposition found a refreshing companionship in the attractive girl at his side who lacked neither wit nor intelligence; who, thought he, was certainly like no one in the world except—herself.

As for Agnes, she was becoming more and more interested in her patient. He was not, after all, a heartless villain, as she had pictured him in her thoughts after hearing of his desertion of his beautiful wife and of the terrible consequences of his desertion. Of course his sin had been enormous, but its punishment had been swift and merciless, and besides, he was absolutely penitent.

"The giving up of that Eugenie St. Leger," she

had remarked to her father, "is a proof of his sincerity, and there is hope for him yet."

She did not know that it was Eugenie who had determined to and who did leave Dane, and that he had only acquiesced in what she herself had proposed. Still, Dane had not objected, but had, in his dazed state, confessed to himself that he and Eugenie must separate; and he had not regretted the step for one moment since. He had answered Eugenie's generous letter, after its effects had partially left him, and had countermanded her order on her bank, telling her that she must keep the money until she had fully and finally determined whether or not to remain immured, and then to use it as she chose. She had not answered that letter. The past was past; there was no possibility of its resurrection.

Since that parting at the London station, his whole regret had been for his own past misdeeds, his sole grief was for the suffering he had caused his lost wife.

It was pitiful, the way he loved her now. His love was an agony, because it was hopeless. Yet, withal, he feared his wife, believing that she deliberately (such was his queer expression) haunted him from beyond the grave.

The second, and the last, day in Naples, was devoted to climbing Vesuvius, and as there was then no railroad by which to reach the summit, the task was quite enough of itself for one day. The four adventurers returned to their hotel delighted with their somewhat perilous excursion, but overwhelmed with fatigue. Agnes felt secretly elated over Mr. Walra-

ven's appearance; the color in his cheeks, though faint, was certainly indicative of a change for the better in his condition, and she was secretly proud of it.

"I'll bring him around yet," she told herself confidently, "and—my eyes, won't he sleep to-night though! All the gray ghosts from kingdom come won't wake him, after that mountain. I do think I must have dropped my reticule behind me a dozen times—yes, a baker's dozen—for him to scramble down after and bring up to me. Oh, if I had him out on the sage plains, with two or three bronchos to break in—m-m-m!" and the young lady laughed merrily at the picture her fancy drew of the elegant and dignified Dane Walraven mounted on a wild-eyed, shaggy, kicking, ducking, rearing broncho pony, on a California ranche!

But, up to that moment, she had seen only the velvet side of Dane Walraven's nature. There was another side, the heroic, which she had not seen.

CHAPTER XLV

ON THE GRAND CANAL AT VENICE

"He had lain dormant long, yet still he wrought,
Like the fang'd python, venom-fraught,
Waiting to strike." —*The Conspirators.*

"Dolly," said his fair mentor, as the two sat together on the deck of the "Verona," with its red and yellow-striped sails flapping above them, "we are soon to be within the shadow of St. Peter. Do you think you will come out of it with any genuine sanctity about you?"

"The solemnity of the place will undoubtedly impress me, Aggie. When I am sitting alone in one of those vast sanctuaries, I feel exceedingly humble. I know, then, my littleness, my helplessness. With Job, I exclaim:

"'Hast Thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?' "

"Yes, you *are* a cheese-head, Eb. But don't rattle. I want to lecture you a few."

Mr. Doolittle looked concerned. He always felt apprehensive of these threatened lectures, they were so poignant. He raised his fat hand in expostulation:

"'Are not my days few?'" he repeated from the same chronic complainer, "'cease, then,' and let me alone that I may take comfort a little.' "

"Not until I put a chin-curb on you, Dolly. Now, pay attention to me: first, you were a moralist and an evangelist, and I found you egging on the winners in a free fight, and I dragged you out of it before you were scalped; then, you were a moralist, pure and simple, and I caught you ogling the pretty mosaic-peddlers in Florence, and the black-eyed flower-girls in Naples; now, you are neither evangelist nor moralist, but a believer in magic and spooks and witchcraft."

"There are many things that are past finding out," gurgled he, with a look of mystery on his round face.

"Oh, you have become infected by Mr. Dane Walraven's vagaries."

"Poor fellow," reflected the victim, shaking his bald head solemnly, "if they are delusions, they are very palpable in shape, Aggie."

"H-mph; how do you know?"

Mr. Doolittle leaned forward, placed his fat hands on his fat knees, and bulged his pale blue eyes in a remarkable manner.

"You, Dolly!" cried Agnes, stamping her foot, "what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," returned he, meekly, receding at once.

"Then, why do you look at me in that tone of voice, and act as if you had swallowed a grape vine?"

"Aggie," said the reverend gentleman, heavily sighing, "shall I impart a secret to you?"

"A dozen, if you like, but—no more of those antics, or I'll have you served up as a lobster."

"Aggie," he resumed, abstractedly, "I saw the gray phantom myself!"

"*You* saw it?"

"Verily, yes, or the truth is not in me."

"Where?"

"In the Boboli Gardens," gasped Mr. Doolittle, forgetting, in the intensity of his emotions, that he was talking to an uncompromising skeptic in such matters.

"When?" demanded she, with ominous quietness.

"A minute after I heard Mr. Walraven's cry," answered he, emboldened by her show of interest.

"Dolly, you're a fool," declared she, with very startling emphasis. "You will have to be—um—suppressed."

"Let me explain, Aggie," pleaded he, hoping to vindicate himself.

"Very well, I will hear your explanation; and then I want you to come to your senses again. You are decidedly 'off,' of late."

But when Mr. Ebenezer Doolittle had a conviction, it was not easily shaken. He had one now, and a well-founded one. In a graphic and earnest way, he told Agnes of the cowed gray figure of a woman flitting across the dark avenue in front of the marble base, whereon sat he waiting for Dane; and he concluded by asserting that the face, only partly revealed to him, was too ghastly to have been human; it was like that of the dead.

Agnes listened to him with a peculiar interest, her mind busy with speculations quite as peculiar.

'Just as I said before," she remarked, "there is something behind it all, a mystery, and we must find the bottom of it."

The conversation ended here, for the boat was now entering the Tiber, and every one was drawn to the railings. As the historic shores closed in on either side, the mighty past rose again in fancy, invoking silence and inspiring reverence.

A week was spent in Rome, city of interminable wonders; and when at length the travelers turned their faces toward the Adriatic, on their way to Venice, they sighed a farewell to the Eternal City, glorious even in its ruins.

On their arrival at Venice, which they reached from Rome, overland to Ancona, and thence by sail on the Adriatic, our party went directly to a hotel, where they arranged for a stay of one week.

One week was once sufficient in duration for the creation of a world, according to the best authority; and, in the case of our four travelers, one week was twice as long as the Fates found necessary to weave another strand in the invisible thread which was leading them on to their various destinies.

Early on the morning of the third day, they engaged a gondola for the passage of the Grand Canal, a miniature voyage between two continuous and ever-varying lines of marble walls which rise on its liquid sides in stately and beautiful architecture, as far as the dazzled vision reaches.

Side by side, in the black dolphin, sat Dane and Agnes, the one gazing out at the magnificent passing panorama with subdued enjoyment, the other rippling with mirth, bubbling over with gayety, and constantly, to Dane's amusement, sounding "Dolly," who sat a

few feet away, as to the extent of his capacity to appreciate what he saw.

"You know, Eb," she asserted, "that you are awfully obtuse; but I hope you will at least carry back to America with you a few grains of information to convince your future flock that you are not really a donkey. There—there, look quick, Dolly," suddenly pointing her taper finger at a terraced flight of marble steps that dipped their bases in the water, "there is where one of the Doges conspired against the State. Do you know who the Doges were, gumpy?"

"I know *what* they were, Aggie," returned he, with severe dignity, "they were magistrates who were constantly engaged in putting down the intrigues headed by women."

"Bravo!" shouted the little tyrant, clapping her hands with excessive appreciation, "you'll do to send to market yet. But—hello, what's this?"

She stooped to pick up from the bottom of the boat a roll of paper, which at that moment had been thrown at her feet by the occupant of a gondola which glided past theirs, going in an opposite direction with surprising velocity.

"Why, it's addressed to 'Dane Walraven!'" exclaimed she, holding it toward the latter, "who can the man be? Do you know him?"

Dane glanced quickly, with a flashing presentiment, at the figure in the flying boat, and uttered a cry of astonishment and anger.

"Silas Thorp!" he shouted.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE HISS OF A SERPENT

“God!
Where shall I lay Thy tardy rod
On this coiled reptile?”

—*The Conspirators.*

The receding boatman had turned his face toward Walraven at the sound of his name, and as he did so he uttered a mocking laugh. It rose on the water and came to Dane's ears like the laugh of a demon, which in truth it was.

For an instant Dane sat as if petrified; then he suddenly sprang into the water.

“Good heaven, what are you about!” screamed Agnes, reaching over the side of the careening boat, and grasping him by the collar of his coat before he had gone beyond reach.

“Steady!” warned the colonel, sliding hastily to the opposite side to preserve the equilibrium of the slender craft, “what's up?”

The colonel had been meditating; he had not been following the recent course of events very closely.

“Here, Dolly, help pull him in,” cried Agnes, tugging bravely at the struggling form.

Dane had evidently jumped overboard with the intention of swimming after the other boat, but it was now far distant, and it would have been impossible to

overtake it. He therefore allowed himself to be hauled back into his own, very pale, and in a most excited state, while the water poured in a stream from his garments.

"What on earth possessed you?" demanded Agnes, savagely.

"It is *he!*" gasped the half-drowned man, leaning against the seat, and straining his eyes toward the vanishing gondola.

"He, he, he, who is 'he'?"

Agnes had no idea of the identity of Silas Thorp; she had not even distinctly heard it, although Dane had but just screamed it into her ears when he plunged overboard.

Dane raised himself, at the question, and with a terrible flame lighting his eyes, said in a steady voice:

"That man murdered my wife's father. He is also the son of a man who, with the assistance of another, murdered my mother and father.

"In the selfishness of my grief and remorse, I had forgotten for a time the duty I owe to the innocent dead; but the sight of that wretch has recalled me to a full sense of it. From this hour I shall devote myself to the pursuit of the fiends who have destroyed my kindred. This one has come to me; God grant that he may not now escape me."

Not a word had been spoken while Walraven made this explanation; but those who listened to it were none the less painfully impressed. The colonel's interest was almost as manifest as his daughter's, whose eyes were flashing with indignation, horror, and ex-

citement. "Can there be such monsters among *white* men?" exclaimed she; *red* men, in her experience of the western fronties, being capable of anything monstrous.

The colonel held out his muscular hand to Dane.

"Mr. Walraven," said he, warmly, "you shall not go alone. I will help you in the hunt. When shall we move?"

"Let us get ashore as soon as possible, my friend," responded Dane, gratefully pressing the extended hand, and trying hard to subdue his excitement; "the murderer, you see, is in Venice. We will at once seek the authorities, and if possible obtain their aid in unearthing him."

The colonel shook his head.

"I doubt very much if we get much help from them," said he, "all those crimes were committed in America and England, and it isn't likely there will be a great deal of interest felt here."

"Then we shall use gold," returned Walraven.

Suddenly, Agnes thought of the little roll of paper. It lay at the bottom of the boat, where it had fallen from her hand. She gave it to Dane, and with nervous fingers he opened it, and read:

"It was I who contrived to throw my cousin in your path, knowing your amiable weakness and her power. She met you, and you fell. That was what I desired.

'I might have been satisfied with your downfall and the death of your wife, perhaps, had you not wrecked Eugenie's life; and while I remember *that*, you have consoled yourself with another victim.

"I shall not lose sight of you. And there is another who follows you, witness of everything you do, who will be near when you breathe your last—to curse you.

"I am going to Paris. I shall remain there long enough to transact some business for Eugenie, who has taken up her abode on a summit of the Jura Mountains at the foot of which runs the road to Geneva, coming from Dijon. Perhaps you would like to see her again; you will find her in the little convent, overlooking the French village which lies at the base of the spur. The villagers will direct you to the place; they call her a saint.

"When you come there you will find me. And you will also find *that other*, who waits to curse you!

"In the meantime, do not forget that it was Silas Thorp who killed your guardian, the father of your wife. Do not forget that Joel Thorp is my father. You are not a coward and you will follow on, tracking me to the end, as I shall track you. We shall meet once more; then, the last act—your death or mine!"

"So be it!" were the three stern words that fell from Dane's lips as he read the last words, and re-folded the paper. He sat for some moments absorbed in thought, then said, as the gondola grated against the marble steps of a landing:

"We will leave Venice to-morrow, if you will."

"For what place?" asked Colonel Blount.

"For Paris—unless we come upon *the man* sooner and nearer," replied Dane, stepping ashore.

He turned to assist Agnes out of the boat, and she, looking into his eyes, said unconsciously:

"He has a terrible mission!"

CHAPTER XLVII

AGAIN THE SHROUD OF GRAY!

Silas Thorp was not again seen in Venice. Search was made for him, even after the departure of the Walraven party, and every effort made to unearth him, without avail.

Meantime, our travelers had started on their way, going by *voiture*, a sort of diligence, to Bologna and Leghorn. At the latter city they were to take boat for Marseilles, and thence proceed north by diligence or chaise.

The journey to Marseilles was made without incident or delay, and on arriving there they were fortunate to find at the post-house a six-horse English chaise which had come down the day before from Orleans, and which they engaged for a round consideration, to take them as far as that city, where they would have no difficulty in procuring any kind of conveyance they might desire for the remainder of their journey.

It was late in the afternoon when they left Marseilles, and it was decided that a stop over night should be made at Nismes, whose remarkable ruins Agnes and her father were curious to examine.

Night had already closed in when the postilion sprang down from his box in front of the "Horn" inn, but the four passengers had enjoyed the ride with zest,

and were in excellent spirits and condition. A smoking supper was served them, after which they fell to discussing their route among the ruins. The moonlight would enable them to see distinctly, and Agnes declared it should not be lost to them.

"What will you do with it, Agnes?" asked her father, deferring as usual to her disposition of his time.

"We will go and see the Roman nymphæum, and the amphitheater, and the temple, and the rest; they will look actually weird in this white light. And perhaps some of the ancient inhabitants will be abroad, to tell us who the bathers were—in the pool presided over by Diana. I wouldn't miss a conversation with one of 'em for a dozen nights' sleep, would you, Dolly?"

But Dolly glanced at Dane and said nothing. Agnes turned her eyes in the same direction, and saw a startled look in his face, then a sober shadow settling over it, while he sat vacantly staring out into the night. Instantly she turned the conversation; but Dane himself renewed the subject of the proposed night-excursion.

"I think your suggestion is a delightful one, Miss Agnes," he said, gravely, "and the scene will certainly be much more picturesque by moonlight; besides, we can start on our journey so much earlier than if we make the visit in the morning."

He spoke like an automaton; and as he concluded, he rose and left the room, saying:

"I will get my walking stick, and join you all in the yard, in a few minutes."

Mr. Doolittle's eyes followed him curiously.

"What are you thinking of, Dolly?" demanded Agnes, sharply.

Dolly shook his head and said, sepulchrally:

"Didn't you notice his look? He's got a warning of something."

"Fiddlesticks; what do you mean?" cried she, impatiently.

"He expects something to come of it," explained the preacher, vaguely.

Agnes laughed satirically.

"Apparitions of Cæsar's road-builders, eh?"

"No," returned Mr. Doolittle, with another lugubrious wabble of his head, "something much more modern, more familiar. I know him; and I tell you what, Aggie, his presentiments are not to be laughed at; they mean something."

But Miss Blount scouted the notion of anything supernatural being possible.

"He's morbid and nervous," she declared, decisively, "and we should not humor his strange fancies. Pretty soon he will be afraid to sleep in the dark, and will have to take a nurse. Don't mope there, Dolly, get up, you and pop, and be ready; I'll have my wraps on in a minute," and Agnes tripped out of the room, leaving Mr. Doolittle still shaking his head, and playing idly with the fringe on his chair.

The marble and brick walls constructed by the Romans in the form of baths and temples, centuries before the occupation of Nismes by the Franks, were of so durable a character as to outlive their history, and

to withstand the inroads of time, the attacks of barbarian soldiery, the attempts of spoliators through scores of generations, to the extent, at least, of leaving fragmentary evidences of their ancient beauty and elegance. The remains, at the date of this visit, were still of sufficient importance to render them interesting to the archæologist and tourist. The amphitheater was situated in a lonely and deserted portion of the environs, almost concealed by tangled undergrowth and groups of forest trees, requiring considerable patience and more or less stooping to get within its circuit.

These difficulties, however, were but trifles to Agnes, who darted into the cavern-like recesses with the fearlessness of an Indian, paying very little attention to the fact that the others were being left behind. In fact, they were contending very deliberately with the intricate lace-work of branches and vines which disputed their passage, the preacher in particular finding the obstructions in his path worse than nettles and tares. Suddenly the moon, which had been until now without a cloud, became obscure, a thick haze settled over its face, and objects could be seen only at a short distance. In the glade-like covert into which Agnes had so boldly plunged, only outlines were now visible. For several minutes nothing had been heard from the adventurous girl, and her father was about to call her name, when out of the gloom in which she had been lost there came the sound of a voice. It was a strange, tense sound, as of one speaking, from some far-off height, words of reproach and sorrow.

For the space of a second, the three men stood entranced, listening without moving a limb; and while they listened they heard these words, uttered by the same strange voice, as if directed toward them:

"Go tell him—I am his wife, on earth, and beyond the earth!"

Then there came an awful cry from Dane Walraven. Into the air his white hands were flung, and with his head thrown back—until to those in front of him it seemed to have left his body—he gasped, as he fell:

"Lost! Lost—and damned!"

With his face to the earth, he lay motionless in the same condition in which the preacher had found him in the Boboli Gardens.

At that instant, Agnes' pale face gleamed out through the drooping foliage; it parted before her, and she stood before the little group, panting, wild-eyed, and dumb.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE BOX IN NUMBER 26 RUE DU MAIL

The distance from Nismes to Paris is about one hundred and fifty French leagues. You start northwardly out of the ancient town with vine and olive-clad hills on the one side, and on the other fertile fields of grain, leaving behind you the ruins of the Maison Quarree, now almost obliterated in part, the Roman amphitheater, the exquisite nymphæum, lost among a cluster of little houses. Involuntarily, at the last turn of the road, when you are about to lose sight of the town finally, you gaze back once more with the recollection that you are looking back at a city six hundred years older than Rome, and which was once one of the largest in Europe.

The Walraven party had hurried away from Nismes on the morning following the scene in the ruined amphitheater, Dane persisting in going on immediately.

Agnes had explained this much of the singular incident.

While she was making her way into the midst of the debris a woman in gray, with a gray hood over her head and partly concealing her face, had emerged without noise from the shrubbery behind, suddenly confronting her with a face like that of a corpse, but with eyes like those of an insane person excited to fury.

"I was on the point of speaking to her, when she lifted her finger, and pointing it at me, said:

"Go where you will, I will follow you—you and him. Neither shall escape; I will haunt you both, forever and ever!"

"I tell you, pop, I was startled. I felt about the same way when we all woke up that night in Muder's dug-out, and saw those five redskins stealing in. But I rallied in a second, and asked her:

"Where do you come from?"

"Her answer chilled me: 'I come from the embers of my grave. I was dead, but I have risen.'

"Then, with the movement of a snake, she darted away, calling back to me the message you heard, and which floored Mr. Walraven.

"But I am convinced that we shall meet her again," Agnes concluded, "and when we do, I mean to solve the whole mystery right there on the spot."

Dane, after being dragged to the "Horn," had regained consciousness, and had staggered to bed, only to mutter again and again in the ears of the preacher, who sat all night watching at his bedside:

"Lost, lost, lost!"

He was out of his chamber very early in the morning, wandering restlessly about the stable-yard, pale and dejected, peering strangely at every passing stranger, as if he expected each moment to meet the one he feared the most on earth or beyond it—his wife.

When the heavy chaise rumbled out of the inn-yard, it bore four sober-faced passengers, not one of whom could have foretold the events that were now near at hand.

Nothing transpired to startle them, during the remainder of their journey; on the contrary, the ride was both fatiguing and monotonous, and every one felt relieved when the barriers were passed, and the coach entered the St. Michel.

But here they met with a mishap, which singularly led to the very trail they were in search of. A butcher's cart collided with the chaise, tearing off one of the front wheels and bringing the entire party to the ground, but without injury.

As they stood surveying the wreck, a dapper little commissionaire came running up, and assisted, without being asked, in unloading the luggage, and several parcels belonging to Agnes, who had made some sort of purchase in every town where they had stopped to change horses.

The little fellow was extremely voluble.

"We will take these things to the parcel office," said he, "it is not far; the Rue du Mail, it is there that such things are left to be sent wherever the owners desire, do you see?"

"And a hotel? Can you direct us to one?" inquired the colonel, as soon as he could head off the stream of the Frenchman's chatter.

"Oui, oui, messieurs," quickly responded he; "but let us first go to the Hotel des Chiens, and leave these things; then when I have shown messieurs the best hotels in Paris, I will return for them, you will see."

Without waiting for an answer, he seized two of the pieces and started off, the rest meekly following with as much as they could carry. On the way to the parcel office, the little fellow rattled off a list of names.

"There is the Hotel de Saxe, Rue de Columbier; the Hotel d'York, Rue Jacob; the Hotel d'Etrangers, Rue de Tournon; all in the Faubourg St. Germain. Oh, you will see! There is M. Roche's, Rue Montorgueil, where a dinner costs a louis. Yes, and Monsieur Le Pretre's, Rue St. Honore, where the waiters are all Spanish; and Monsieur Foco's, Parc Royal, he who was a colonel before he opened a *traiteur*; and there is another in the Rue de Tournon, near the Luxembourg, where Englishmen go for those great thick mutton chops—"

"Stop—monkey!" cried Agnes, exasperated by his astounding flow of information, "we shall believe directly, that one-half of Paris is composed of soup-houses, and one-half its population cooks!"

"Oui, oui, mademoiselle," responded the irrepressible, "and here we are."

As they entered the office Agnes glanced with some curiosity at the innumerable packages, boxes, bags, and miscellaneous articles which almost choked the entrance. Suddenly she stopped, and stooped over a leathern bag, on the side of which was painted a name.

"Pop, come here!" cried she, excitedly; and as the colonel turned toward her, she read in a very loud voice:

"Silas Thorp, London!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Dane, with a rush at the bag, which he fairly stumbled over, in his eagerness to satisfy himself that she had read the name aright.

But the hated name was there, and of course its

owner was in Paris. A hurried inquiry elicited the information that the bag had been left there early in the morning, and that it was to be forwarded to a number in an obscure street, which the obliging clerk, with an eye upon Agnes, glibly disclosed to Walraven, who could hardly contain his impatience.

As they left the office they did not observe a man's figure gliding past them with a malignant scowl on his face. But he hastily entered the office, took up the bag, and said to the clerk:

"Get me a fiacre, quick. I will take this with me. I am in a great hurry."

The clerk darted out of the door, hailed a passing "whip," and as the man, who was none other than Silas himself, sprang into the fiacre, he beckoned the driver to him.

"Do you see those four persons walking away?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the driver, glancing after them.

"Very good. Well, you will drive slowly behind them, until they enter a hotel; then you will stop. Do not lose sight of them for an instant, if you would earn a double fare."

When the fiacre started, Silas leaned back in his seat, drew his hat over his eyes, and muttered:

"It is not in Paris that we shall meet again; but I mean to lure him to a very different place, and then—the end!"

CHAPTER. XLIX

A LETTER OF REVELATION FOR DANE

"The end draws near; but ere the closing scene
Rounds this brief drama, I'll prepare a feast
At whose full board Vengeance shall sup."

—*The Conspirators.*

Walraven and his friends had taken apartments in the Hotel de Tours, Rue du Paon, then much frequented by English gentlemen; and here, after a brief rest and a comfortable meal, they gathered in the parlor for a quiet council.

Silas Thorp was now the sole subject of their thoughts and conversation.

"The box said Hotel de Picardie," observed Agnes, "and we ought to send there, or go, one of us."

"One of us, and we are how many?" chirped Mr. Doolittle, amused at her expression.

"Take care, Polly," retorted she, "you are trying to crack a joke, and it may fracture your skull."

"But you know, Aggie, that ladies do not go out alone in Paris," ventured Dolly.

"Oh. Don't they? Well, that explains the conduct of those two tender-foot Johnnies who followed us all the way to the hotel. It was because I walked alone. One of them was a character. I declare, it gave me the colic whenever I looked at his blue gills. And that chummy of his! Queer varmint, wasn't he? He

had the cinch on the dude, though. I do believe he puts a drop of brandy on Dudy's tongue every morning to keep him from having 'conniptions. I suppose he's the guardian of the other monkey. Well, I wouldn't mind using a riding whip on a few of the class. But—who will go to the Picardie?"

"I shall go, as soon as it is quite dark," replied Walraven, looking out through the stained window at the deepening twilight.

"And suppose he is there, what will you do?" asked Colonel Blount.

"I shall not alarm him, but will hasten to the prefect," responded he, quietly.

At dusk he went to the address, but was told that no such person had stopped there. Disappointed, he returned to his friends.

"What shall we do now?" inquired Mr. Doolittle, sorrowfully watching the gloomy face of Walraven.

"We must search further; he is in Paris," returned he, with a compression of the lips.

But a messenger was at that moment approaching the parlor with the very information he was seeking.

"Please, messieurs," said the servant who entered the room with a letter in his hand, "here is a billet for Monsieur Walraven."

Dane took the letter, uttered an exclamation, and tore open its covering.

"It is from Silas Thorp himself!" cried he, in an agitated voice, and, as he rapidly scanned it—"He has stated all that we wish to know, and more—"

His words were cut short by a cry, and he fell to the floor, holding the letter tightly in his hand.

"He is getting to be as squeamish as a woman," grumbled the colonel, as he bent over the prostrate man, whose lips were frothing.

"You can't blame him this time," exclaimed Agnes, who had taken the letter from Dane's grasp, and had hurriedly read it. "Listen to this:

"'This is the last time I shall ever write your hated name. You have been following me that you might hand me over to the hounds of the law. Well, I have not gone in another direction, as you know, but have kept you in sight, because I had a purpose in running *you* down. I start to-morrow for Geneva; and I shall stop at the miserable habitation on the mountain, before leaving France. If you would meet me, come to that place. We will then settle all scores between us.

"You will also meet two women there; one is Eugenie, who has sought in those wild solitudes a place for her intolerable sorrows to spend themselves. The other woman is—*your wife*.

"Yes, your wife!

"The time has come when you may know the truth. She did not die, although she was put in the tomb to which your treachery and guilt consigned her. The earthquake shocked her into life; she escaped from the burning ruins of the vault, fled to Southampton, with partially shattered reason, and took passage on a vessel upon which my father and Jem Crouch had shipped as sailors. They took good care to tell her of your *liaisons*. They told her you were traveling with Eugenie; then, that you had fitted up a dove's

nest for her in London; later, that you had thrown Eugenie off, and were traveling with another American girl, Agnes Blount. It was I who offered to prove to her the truth. I led her after you from place to place, until she became convinced of your heartless depravity; then I persuaded her to go to Eugenie. She has given up hope, once more, and she loathes you. But you will see her, you will hear her curse you; and then—you shall die! I have sworn it. Meet me, if you dare to, at the convent.”

When Dane recovered from his swoon, he was clamorous for an immediate departure; but that was impossible; they must wait until the morrow.

“A barge leaves the quay at seven in the morning,” said the colonel, “we can take that to Auxerre—”

“A barge? By no means,” objected Dane; “we must have horses, and good ones.”

The colonel did not argue the matter then, but later, he persuaded Dane of the advisability of beginning with horses at Auxerre.

“If we ride,” observed he, glancing at the preacher, “we shall be obliged to leave Mr. Doolittle behind.”

“That will make no difference,” promptly remarked the latter, “I can follow on; I would be a burden to you, even if I could ride a horse.”

“Or an ass, like Baalam,” suggested Agnes, saucily.

“Verily, yes,” confessed he, meekly. “But then, I shall have you to take care of, and we can journey quite comfortably together.”

“Have *me* to take care of! Oh, you comical!” screamed Agnes, with a startling explosion of mirth.

"Well, Eb, I shall leave you to bring up the rear of the procession with the small pieces of baggage, while I go to take care of pop and Mr. Walraven."

Mr. Doolittle's eyes opened wide with amazement.

"What!" exclaimed he, "you surely do not intend to ride a beast from Paris to the Swiss frontier, and climb those fearful mountains besides?"

"Just so, Ebby. And when I arrive at Geneva I shall have an enormous appetite, and I want you to have rooms ready for us at the best inn, and a square meal for four. And you are to be on the lookout for my mule and me, so you had better start by post as soon as we leave in the morning."

Mr. Doolittle sank back in his chair, a prey to his own peculiar emotions, and said nothing more during the evening.

At the Quai d'Orsay, next morning, Agnes turned to him with an air of protection, and said:

"Now, Dolly, I shall expect you to turn up all right in Geneva. I shall also require you to account for every hour of the time between now and then. Keep your eyes off the grisettes; they are too cute for you. If you should make an evening of it with one of them, you would be lost, as sure as you are a lamb! Even I could not find you again. Now, good-bye, old boy; go to roost early and say your prayers regularly."

The amiable evangelist looked sorrowfully after the receding boat as it labored out of the slip, and murmured reflectively:

"Ah, this western energy!"

CHAPTER L

THE "THREE CANDLESTICKS" AT AUXERRE

Auxerre, a dirty town thirty-three leagues from Paris, abounding in churches, and conspicuous one hundred years ago as containing the finest ecclesiastic palace in France, lies on the side of a hill, and was formerly reached, except in cases where great dispatch was urgent, by barges (from Paris) drawn by ten horses. It was therefore a very sleepy town, and its citizens, forty years ago, were generally locked inside their shuttered houses when the bishop's bell sounded ten strokes.

It was shortly after this hour, on a November night, that three men came up from the banks of the Yonne, and entered, without being observed, the ancient inn of the Three Candlesticks.

The landlord was at once requested to show them to a large room, where they could have perfect privacy, and was instructed to have them called at exactly five in the morning.

Left to themselves, with several candles illumining the mildewed walls, the well-worn furniture, and the dark faces of the trio, they drew their chairs together, and were soon engaged in a conversation so absorbing as to render them totally oblivious of their surroundings.

The house was very still and very dark when these men arrived, but there was one very wide-awake individual, beside themselves, in their near vicinity when they asked for a room.

This person was a traveler also, and had taken a sleeping apartment an hour before, giving no name, and leaving no instructions with the landlord to be roused in the morning. First going to his room, he had sat by the window, looking steadily toward the river; and when the three strangers appeared in the street below, he had put out his light, thrust his feet in a pair of felt shoes, and softly descended the stairs, which were quite dark. In the passage below, there was a small closet opening into it, in the inner wall of which was a diminutive window, intended to receive light from the large room on the other side, and with glazing on the small panes of glass.

Into this closet the stranger quietly slipped, leaving the door slightly ajar, and there remained until the three arrivals were consigned to an apartment. The one given them was the large room just mentioned; and as soon as they were inside, the stranger emerged from the closet, went to the stable-yard, and in a few minutes returned with a stout young groom. These two now entered the closet, closing the door and bolting it from within.

The three men in the large room were seated at a table directly under the little closet-window, with their backs to the wall. Had they been facing it, they might have seen two clear spots, of about an inch each, in diameter, gradually appear at the bottom of

two of the panes of glass, and then two eyes gluing themselves to the spots and steadily regarding them during the whole of the hour or more in which they sat in council.

The three men were Joel Thorp, his son Silas, and Jem Crouch; and, with a knowledge of past events, the reader will easily divine what had now brought them together.

"Let's 'ave some 'alf and 'alf, ef we've got to have such a long confab," suggested Joel, who looked jaded, as if he had traveled fast and far.

"No," objected his son, frowning, "we don't want any muddled brains here to-night. You can make a night of it after the work is done, if you choose."

"Wery well, Sile," sighed the parent, resignedly, "yure the manager. I allus said you had the brains o' the whole fam'ly, not incloodin' yure poor mother, her loss we mourn."

"And Ann, you forget Ann," sneered Crouch, "she had convictions, if I am not mistaken."

Joel's one eye was almost extinguished by a scowl.

"Ann were a traitor," growled he, "an' I do not no longer wabble around no more on her account as I used ter; howsomever, she *were* a woman of extr'o'nery convictions, I don't deny it."

"Never mind that now," interposed Silas, checking his father with a gesture, "we have business on hand."

"An' wery interestin' business, requirin' wery skillful performers wersed in the art, as King John said w'en he pulled the Jew's teeth at a thousand crowns a tooth. Wot's yure plan, son?"

Silas leaned over the table, and for several seconds silently scrutinized the two, turning his head slowly from one to the other as he sat between them. At length:

"When did you leave the old convent?" he asked Crouch.

"Tuesday morning, ten days ago."

"And you stopped in the village?"

"We did, and got horses there. They're in the stable here, snug and fresh."

"What, you rode the same horses all the way?"

Crouch laughed. "Why, they aren't the same color they were when we started," said he, "but we weren't particular about that. Likely they'll again change color going back."

"About every night, hey, Jem?" chuckled Joel.

"About. We like variety," answered Crouch, dryly. Silas mused a moment.

"We shall reach the village, then, about one day ahead of Walraven," observed he. "You are sure he started from Paris by the slow barge?"

"Yes, I saw him and his partner, Blount, and the girl go aboard, leaving the preacher behind. I heard 'em deciding to abandon the notion of horses to this place. They were to get animals here, and will go through Dijon."

"Very good. We shall be far enough in front. Now let us proceed with the plan. You can imitate Walraven's handwriting, Jem?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, you are to write a letter to his wife, sign

his name to it, and deliver it to her as soon as we arrive near the convent. The letter must inform her that he is coming for her, full of remorse, and that he does not wish to see Eugenie, for reasons she will understand. She must therefore come to the edge of the cliff, stand on the 'black rock,' and watch his approach up the mule path."

"And then—what?"

"You and father will go up by one way and I by another. I must not be seen, you know. I shall hide in the rock-hollow a hundred feet or so back from the spot where she is to stand. Walraven will come up directly under the 'black rock.' When he arrives there, you must be concealed behind the ledge, as close to him as possible. At the moment he sees his wife, I will rush toward her and push her over the wall. When she falls, she will be done for; and while he is wailing over her, you will rush in upon him and bind him. I have laid out my plan for disposing of him afterward, but I will not talk of that now."

"But the other cove?"

Silas drew from his breast a long-barreled pistol.

"I am a good shot," said he, stroking the shining barrel, "and while you are gently ministering to the bereaved husband, I will send the American into eternity. Look at this," continued he, now producing a large ball from his waistcoat pocket, "I have scratched two letters on it, D. W. When the body is found, it will bear within the bullet-wound the only proof needed to convict Walraven of murder—if he survives *me*."

Joel gazed at his infamous progeny with looks of profound admiration.

"Sile," said he, winking his ogreish eye horribly, "yure a gen'us, that's wot *you* air, an' I'm proud to be yure fayther."

Silas made no reply, but motioned his "fayther" to desist.

"It will be best for us to separate just before we reach the village," said he, "and not enter it together. I will go around it, I think, and take the path leading up to the back of the convent. And now, as everything is understood and settled, we had better sleep."

"Where?" queried Joel, glancing around the bare room.

"Right here in our chairs; we will not run the risk of oversleeping;" and Silas drew his own away from the table, tilted his back to the wall, and closed his eyes. His companions followed his example, and in a few minutes the three conspirators were giving noisy evidence of their ability to slumber under any circumstances, even burdened as they were with crime, and on the very eve of perpetrating new ones.

At this moment, the two eyes vanished from the closet-window.

CHAPTER LI

WHAT BEFELL SILAS IN THE JURA

“And now let Justice don her gown,
Slow-footed priestess, whose late frown
Foredooms the felon; let the laws
Arm Retribution in her cause.”

—*Sage of Mentor.*

Thrae travelers were climbing a rugged path leading to a summit of the Jura Mountains.

On every side, tall, gnarled trees, blackened and bent, rose frowningly and groaned as the gusts of wind struck and swayed their twisted arms.

The gloomy skies overhead seemed never to have felt the warmth of the sun, so dark and full of murk they were.

The weird face of the mountain imposed silence on the slow toilers, and a half hour had passed without a word having been spoken. But now and again some mighty bird flapped its black wings over them and darted away, screaming defiance to the invaders of their solitude.

At length the travelers stopped upon a ledge of rock which jutted over a wall almost perpendicular, the base of which was washed by a brawling current of dark water hundreds of feet below.

Directly over the spot where the three now stood rose a mass of black rock, some forty feet in height, of a peculiar shape, and flat on its top.

The ledge itself was perhaps eighty feet in breadth, and extended circularly around the loftier cliff, so that its farther extremity could not be seen by the persons who now paused to look into the chasm beneath.

One of the three was a young woman of lithe and graceful figure; and as she turned to her companions with a countenance animated by the scene and the effort she had put forth to reach it, her clear voice rose and fell with a thousand musical vibrations among the hollows and jutting spurs that encircled her.

"What a wild scene!" she exclaimed, pointing off to the right at an imposing mass of rocky columns.

"And a fascinating one, Miss Agnes," observed her companion with the yellow locks. "It seems to me that Peace must have her home up there."

"Oh, if that is her home, she must be a creature of many habitations, for we have seen in the Rockies and in the Sierras, a dozen scenes as lonely, grand and imposing as that one yonder, haven't we, pop?"

"I reckon you're right, daughter," responded the latter, looking off at the crags reflectively.

A moment later his gaze fell upon the path directly beneath him, which wound, with many contortions, upward toward the farther extremity of the ledge, and he gave a start of surprise.

"What is that object moving up from below?" he asked, abruptly.

"Look, look, Mr. Walraven!" cried Agnes, whose brilliant eyes were dancing; "it is not moving up at all, it is a man tugging at a long rope. What can he be doing?"

"True," said Dane, approaching the edge of the plateau; "and by the expression of his face it must be some deadly work he is at. But—merciful heaven, it is Vincent!"

The man had been gradually creeping backward along the craggy path, and with his head thrown back, was gazing upward toward the end of the rope, which appeared to be at a level with the top of the ledge. In this attitude his face became plainly visible, and Dane had recognized the features of Charlie Vincent, the ward of the city marshal of Boston, now a stalwart and handsome man, but at this moment with a countenance absolutely fearful in its revengeful and desperate expression.

What could he be doing? How came he there? were questions that flitted through Dane's mind, as he hurried along the curving ledge, with Agnes and her father close behind him. In a few seconds they had turned the curve, and the spectacle at which they now excitedly gazed was a strange and thrilling one.

The upper end of the rope was fastened around the body of a man in such a way as to pinion his arms to his sides, rendering him entirely helpless. He indeed appeared to have no life in his body, since there was no show of resistance whatever, as it was slowly dragged forward toward the edge of the cliff by the man below.

Agnes was the first to espy the fearful object, and she started back with horror.

"Heavens," cried she, "it is a man!"

"So it is."

Colonel Blount's exclamation was peculiar; so was the look in his face. He stood watching the murderous spectacle with evident satisfaction, with no apparent intention of interfering.

Dane and Agnes regarded him with amazement.

"Oh, pop!" cried the latter, her handsome face paling, "why do you act so? Are you going to see the man drawn over the precipice?"

"Wait," returned he, glancing at Walraven, who looked on as if petrified. "Now, look closely, and see if he is worth saving."

"Silas Thorp!" shouted Dane, suddenly bounding to the edge of the cliff and leaning over it at the risk of losing his balance.

"Yes," returned the colonel, "he is cheating the hangman, but sparing *you* any further trouble. It will soon be up with him. Ten feet more, and over he'll go."

"Horrible!" gasped the girl, fascinated by the sight. But she instantly recovered her presence of mind, and with a final entreaty directed to her companions to go to the rescue, she darted along the face of the ledge, veering around the curve close to the overhanging rock, and vanished down a steep path covered with huge boulders.

"What in God's name is the girl after now?" exclaimed her father, with a groan of apprehension for her safety, as he and Dane rushed after her.

As they turned the curve, the question was answered by what they saw.

Dashing down the sideling steep with the nimble

grace and boldness of the chamois, Agnes was swiftly making her way toward the helpless victim of Vincent's unaccountable vengeance, who to all appearances was already lifeless.

Meantime, at the other end of the rope, Vincent was straining with an unhalting step to carry out his fearful purpose, winding the rope about his wrist again and again, as it slipped off with each rebound of the body over the bowlders, his eyes gleaming with murderous fury, and bent unwaveringly upon its doomed object.

Agnes had uttered no cry, had glided down the side of the cliff as silently as though shod with velvet, and stood now, not twenty feet away from the body, but effectually separated from it by an intervening gulch. Then she raised her voice to a shout:

"Stop—for God's sake, stop!"

With a quick upward glance, in which there was a momentary surprise, Vincent slightly relaxed his efforts.

For one moment only. Then, with a sudden jerking motion, in which he seemed to put forth an energy of strength that was superhuman, he sprang backward, and the body of Silas Thorp bounded over the ledge.

From the very edge of the precipice the two men watched it rebound from rock to rock, until it plunged into the brown waters below, and disappeared forever.

CHAPTER LII

THE FIGURE ON THE "BLACK ROCK"

When the last reverberations had died away with the plunging of Silas Thorp's body into the black stream at the bottom of the cliff, the slayer uncovered his head, and wiped from his forehead the perspiration gathered there. Then, replacing his hat, he slowly climbed to the spot where Agnes still stood listening for some further sound from the abyss. His white skin, very unlike that of the weather-stained mountaineer his dress had suggested, gave Agnes a new surprise. As he approached her, she fixed her black eyes upon him, with solemn inquiry, and asked, almost in a whisper:

"Why did you do it?"

Vincent regarded her with a look as solemn as her own, and answered:

"It was an awful thing to do, but it had to be done. Let us go to the convent above, and I will explain it all to your friends and you."

He offered her his hand, to assist her up the rocky way, but with a repugnant gesture she refused it, and walked at his side in silence.

At the top of the ledge, they met Colonel Blount and Walraven; and Vincent and the latter immediately greeted each other as old acquaintances.

"I knew you were here," remarked Vincent, as they walked forward, "and I expected to find you up yonder," pointing toward the highest level of the spur. "But since you are all together, I will explain matters before we go up to—the others."

"The others" meant Eugenie and Eleanor, and the words were spoken hesitatingly, and with constraint.

To Dane it was evident that Vincent knew everything of his history and of his movements.

"Go on, then," said he, in subdued tones, expecting to hear revelations both painful and startling; and he was not disappointed.

Vincent drew from his pocket a silver repeater, and glancing at the time, observed:

"It is twelve o'clock. In half an hour there will be two more of your acquaintances in this immediate neighborhood; I have just time enough for my story before they arrive."

Then, Agnes and her father having come up, he proceeded:

"You will recollect hearing from Captain Bardell the story of the city marshal's participation in the abduction affair, when Joel Thorp and his pal kidnaped you. Well, neither Joel nor his son Silas ever forgave the marshal, and from that time forward they sought by every means in their power to injure or to destroy him. They were finally only too successful.

"You know that the marshal adopted me as his son. Well, we were the same in feeling toward each other as father and son; his affection for me was sincere and disinterested, and the gratitude I at first felt for

the benefits he conferred upon me deepened into love; and he was worthy of it.

"Before Silas Thorp left Boston, in fact on the very night after the death of Mrs. Bardell, he came to the marshal's house, and asked to see him. The marshal was already suspicious of him, believing that he had some secret in his life not at all to his credit, at least, but knowing him only as Doctor Pelham. The conduct of the man during that visit was so singular that he was closely watched, both by the marshal and myself, and when he left the house the marshal said to me:

'Charlie, I believe that man is not the person he represents himself to be; and I believe he came here to assassinate me!'

"I was greatly shocked at this, but the marshal's manner was so earnest I believed he had some foundation for his suspicions. Nothing further occurred, however, and we soon heard of the revelations made by Mrs. Bardell as to Doctor Pelham's identity, and of the real cause of the captain's death; but Silas had disappeared, as had all the rest of the brood, and we supposed there was an end of the case.

"After the marshal's retirement from his office, seven years ago, he lived quietly in Boston, where I had engaged in business, and the lives of both of us were as peaceful as we could wish, except for the death of his wife, which happened two years ago. That event left the old gentleman low-spirited; and last summer I persuaded him to take a trip with me to England.

"We came to London; and in October went down to

Winchester to see you, anticipating a great amount of pleasure from our visit. I will candidly confess that we were painfully shocked at the story of your misfortunes—and your wife's; and we hastened back to London.

"One foggy night, about six o'clock, we were passing through Regent's Park on our way to our lodgings in St. John's Wood Road, Portland Town, when a man sprang into the path from the grove on our right, and drove a knife into the marshal's side.

"By the lights from the windows of the Clergy Orphan School opposite the park entrance, I caught a moment's glimpse of the assassin's face, before he turned away. It was the face of Doctor Pelham!

"The murderer ran out of the park and into Wellington Place, followed by a number of people brought to the spot by my outcries, while I remained with my benefactor. With assistance at hand, we bore him into the Orphan School building, where the murderer's knife was withdrawn; and inside of an hour I was alone. Then, looking down on the dead face of the noble friend I had lost, I uttered an oath of vengeance against his murderer, who, I believed, had escaped. Such was the fact; and I began my search for him.

"I traced him from place to place, finally to Paris. There, in a parcel office, I saw a box on which his infamous name was painted. I watched the office, saw you and your three friends enter, and recognized Dane Walraven.

"When Silas Thorp took the box away, I followed after his cab. He dogged you to your hotel, then went

to the Quai d'Orsay, where he wrote the letter you received, which he gave to a boy to deliver, and was then joined by Joel Thorp and Crouch.

"I bribed the boy to let me read the letter then, resealed and addressed it, and it went to you that night. The three wretches took the barge to Auxerre, and I slipped on board and kept out of sight, preceding them to the inn, where I later on heard their plot to destroy you and your wife. I followed them on to the village yonder, keeping them in view day after day, until they arrived last night. Then I went to the landlord of the inn at which the father and Crouch stopped, told him they were escaped murderers, and induced him to send for two gendarmes to hold them until your arrival. They are down there, in the hands of the soldiers, who await your coming.

"I lost track of Silas last night, but went on up the mountain this morning, and found him asleep in a hollow near the old convent. I bound his hands and feet without waking him, and then roused him. The rage and astonishment of the wretch were beyond description. He raved like a maniac, cursed and taunted me, struggled to free himself, and ended by mockingly rehearsing his horrible deed in the park! I became maddened, caught up a coil of rope which he had brought with him—no doubt for some murderous purpose—and tied it about him, then started to drag him down the mountain. Doubtless he knew his doom was certain, whether I or the law had him; for he railed at me as I dragged him along, telling me that he had intended to swing you over the cliff, bound

hand and foot, and to leave you there for the vultures! I feared to let such a fiend live and—I drew him down the cliff and over the precipice."

As Vincent stopped speaking, he turned his eyes toward the black rock above, started, and exclaimed:

"Look! And remember that I saved you both."

On the verge of the rock stood the woman in gray, looking down upon their upturned faces with a scared face, with distended eyes, with outspread hands.

At the sight of her—his wife—Dane Walraven uttered a frightful cry, and fell back into his friend's arms; but without heeding this, Agnes darted around the base of the rock, and in a minute more had appeared on the summit. Before Eleanor could retreat, Agnes had caught her by both arms, and held her with a strength she in vain struggled to overcome.

The next instant, Vincent had reached the two, and together they led the trembling woman down the rock-strewn path to the spot where her husband lay white as marble, and as rigid.

Eleanor's eyes wandered a moment over the faces of the speechless group, as if pleading for an explanation. Her clouded reason for a few moments even prevented her from seeing what lay at her feet. She seemed petrified with fear, and a low, hysterical laugh issued from her open lips.

With a sob of uncontrollable grief, Agnes laid her hand upon the arm that hung listlessly at her side, and whispered:

"Do you not know him—your husband?"

A gleam of light came into the dark eyes; they

settled upon the prostrate and rigid figure over which the two men knelt, and with a cry of anguish she threw herself upon it.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" she screamed, pressing her hands upon his haggard face, "I have killed him!"

The next instant she lay at his side, and the two white faces were as those of the dead.

CHAPTER LIII

LOOK ON THIS PICTURE, READER, THEN—ADIEU

“No doubt by this time he’s been doing mischief—
Aha! there’s a young woman at his kerchief,
Teaching the parson how to tie a knot,
For dominie stands by, as if ’twere in the plot.
—*Fair Felix.*”

Winchester was agog.

The staid old cathedral town was in a state of social ebullition. Groups of grave citizens stood on the streets, discussing a subject the merest mention of which sent business to the dogs, and secured the instant attention of the busiest tradesman.

What was the cause of all this commotion?

A hundred tongues were ready to tell the humblest beggar who asked for news instead of alms. The gossips of the town flew hither and thither in house-raid, but never so much as an eyebrow was raised at the bonnet awry or the gown unstayed, if the wearer brought news. Toilets were forgotten, business was suspended, dinners were neglected; and every face wore a triple expression—amazement, awe, incredulity.

Two men, clad in the garb of sailors, came with a rolling gait toward the “Black Swan” Inn, just off a ship at Southampton. Near the inn they stopped to inquire “what was going on in the dum town?”

A ready tongue informed them:

"At Walraven House, out yonder by the Itchen, the mistress died ten months ago, and was laid away safe and snug in the family vault, on the day of the earthquake hereabouts. That night, her body was burned to ashes, because the lightning struck the vault, and the earthquake threw it down. It was positively true; the coffin and the body were both consumed.

"Well, to-day the mistress came to life again. She is there—at Walraven House, and her husband is there; a live man and a ghost, mayhap. But it is a resurrection; the days of miracles have returned!"

The two men had listened attentively. But they showed neither awe nor astonishment, simply fear. They stared into each others' weather-beaten faces, and one of them said, in a hoarse whisper:

"Curse 'em, they'll have us again, if we don't make tracks. It were hard enough to slip them French bagonets, but it will be 'arder 'ere. Blast m' eyes, wot's become o' Sile, that he didn't warn us the cove wos a comin' 'ome?"

"Perhaps they've got him," snarled the other; "but come along, let's make for the station. We must get aboard the dickey and put for the Isle."

They were hurrying on toward the station, at every step casting uneasy glances around them, and muttering curses upon their "bloody luck," when a squad of constables approached them, headed by a sergeant and a man in civilian's dress.

The civilian was Dane Walraven. As he crossed the street toward the sailors, his dark eyes lost their natural tints and became balls of flame.

"At last!" he exclaimed, holding himself back with a mighty effort, as he looked into the faces of his mother's and his father's murderers.

"Who be these, your worship?" inquired the sergeant, eyeing his prospective game with professional satisfaction.

"They are the murderers we are after—James Crouch and Joel Thorp," returned Walraven, "take them!"

The sailors had stopped, dumfounded by this sudden irruption of their enemies.

"Give 'em the darbies, you fellers!" commanded the sergeant; and without a movement of resistance, the fetters were slipped on the brawny wrists, and the prisoners were led briskly down the street.

As they were hurried along, Joel succeeded in recovering his breath, and turning his head, yelled hoarsely:

"Oh, you're in for it, yet. There's one of us left, an' he'll find ye, curse ye!"

That was a gala-night at Walraven House. From every window streamed a golden flood of light from sconce and candlestick. In the long dining hall tables were spread with snowy damask, decked with flowers of every hue and perfume, loaded with dainty fruits and condiments. Servants flitted through the passages and halls with noiseless feet and smiling faces, or tripped up and down the staircases on many and mysterious errands. A tall butler in blue and buff livery came into the dining-hall from time to time to inspect with professional eye the arrangement of the table upon which dinner was soon to be served.

It was to be a dinner of thanksgiving; and the first

course was to appear on the table at precisely six, to as many plates. It was now five o'clock and thirty minutes, as the butler informed the cook, by messenger (the dignity of his office not permitting him to visit the kitchen), and the terrapin must be brought on in just twenty-three minutes.

Five minutes after this important announcement the front door knocker sent its miniature thunder through the house, and as the call was answered by a footman, a fresh, ringing voice exclaimed:

"Gingham, as I live!"

And then there was a merry laugh that startled the echoes, waking some that had slept in unvisited corridors and chambers for a quarter of a century.

"Well, G. Ingham," resumed the voice, after the echoes had gone to sleep again, "so you've changed your vocation and I will have to get another groom and champion."

"Oh, miss, I'll do your fighting if you please— atween and atwixt me dooties 'ere," responded the footman, with subdued heartiness.

"Thanks, Gingham. But we are here now on a mission of peace. You've had no occasion, I hope, to tap the claret since I left Winchester, have you?"

"Waunce, miss, begging your parding."

"Really!" with intense interest in the soft tones. "And pray, whose did you spill, Gingham?"

"It were the gardener's, miss. He said as 'ow he'd put a nose on me."

"A nose on you! That's rich. Now, Gingham, if he had offered to take some off, he would have done

you a favor," glancing at the footman's extraordinary proboscis.

"Me nose is not at all in me way, miss," returned he, with lugubrious gravity, resuming his ramrod attitude suddenly.

"Keep it all, then, Gingham," said Miss Agnes, condescendingly. "Where's Mr. Doolittle and my father?"

"In the library, miss, with Mr. Walraven."

"And Mrs. Walraven?"

"In the library with the gentlemen, miss."

"And Mrs. Cavendish?"

"Oh, the 'ousekeeper. She's in the dining-hall, waiting to receive the dishes as they comes in 'ot."

"You'll pass, Gingham," and Miss Agnes swept into the library at the moment dinner was announced. Then, six smiling people took their places at the flower-laden table in the center. Mrs. Walraven was attired in a dinner dress of rich wine-colored silk, daintily trimmed with rare old lace, her beautiful face warmed by a faint tinge of pink, her eyes lustrous and peaceful.

Walraven's face no longer wore its hunted, haggard expression, but all its lineaments were smooth, while the rich hue of health darkened his cheek, and his blue eyes shone with happiness and gratitude, as they looked into those of his wife.

In such forgiveness as he found there, surely there was sublimity; but then, Eleanor Walraven was the noblest of women.

Two months had been spent on the Continent, after the reunion on the Jura, Agnes and her father, and

Mr. Doolittle being of the party. At Blenheim Mrs. Walraven had made the acquaintance of an English widow lady, who was then a governess in the minister's family; and a sudden liking for her induced an offer of a position as a companion, which the lady had accepted. On the return to Walraven House, Mrs. Cavendish had assumed temporarily the charge of the house. She was a prepossessing person, of perhaps forty, refined and amiable; and she had been accorded a position as a member of the family.

Mrs. Cavendish sat at the end of the table, opposite the host, and at her left Mr. Doolittle had been placed, Agnes sitting on his left.

It was observed by Agnes, whose eyes were like meteors, that the Reverend Ebenezer Doolittle and the comely widow exchanged frequent amatory glances during the meal, and appeared to have established relations decidedly confidential. Once, indeed, the young lady actually detected them clasping hands under the table!

Much disgusted by this unclerical conduct, Agnes took the arm of Mr. Doolittle, when the party rose to return to the library, and detained him in the hall, until the rest were out of hearing. Then, releasing him, she turned him briskly about, so that she faced him.

"Dolly," she exclaimed, frowning with a severity that greatly abashed him, "you have been canting so long, it seems impossible for you to ever be vertical. Now, I want to tell you that I won't have any more such actions as you were just now guilty of at the table! You're a sweet-scented nosegay, aren't you?"

"Nay, nay, my dear friend," stammered he, becoming very red, "the—the charms of Venus—"

"Oh, oh, you old masher!" groaned Agnes, horrified at this semi-confession; "ever since we left Paris, you have been showing symptoms of this renegadism. But I tell you," with a stamp of the little foot, "it shall stop right here. If I see any more of it cropping out I shall let Gingham loose, and he'll shake you up till you'll think you are crossing a buffalo-wallow at two-forty in a butcher's wagon!

"Now," continued the poor man's trainer, taking him by the hand and drawing him toward the library door, "get that rueful look off your face at once, Dolly, and—caper."

Mr. Doolittle "capered" in right lively fashion, glad to escape further lecturing; and the little assembly was soon employed in discussing plans for the ensuing week.

That night, when they were about to separate for their respective rooms, Mr. Walraven asked Mr. Doolittle to make his home at Walraven House.

"You are alone," said the grateful host, "and you have been with us long; we should miss you greatly."

Mr. Doolittle's eyes were somewhat moist, as he listened to this kindly talk; but he shook his head slowly, and his eyes wandered over to a corner of the room where the fair widow sat. Rising with deliberateness, he walked with his old-time dignity, his right hand thrust in the bosom of his tightly-buttoned frock coat, straight toward the unsuspecting lady, and taking her hand in his, he led her up to Dane, both of them blushing rosily.

"My kind friend," said he, with emotion which well became him, "in declining your generous invitation with thanks, it is meet that I give a sufficient reason. This dear woman has promised to accompany me back to Boston—as my wife. To-morrow we shall notify a minister of our intention to unite. Congratulate me, dear friends, on my prospect of happiness."

The good man turned toward each of his astonished auditors with a beaming countenance and as he did so, they rose and approached him.

"Dolly," said Agnes, giving him her slender hand, "I was mistaken; you are excusable!"

When they had each bid him godspeed, Dane and Eleanor remained standing, each holding one of his chubby hands.

"God bless you, my dear sir," said Dane, with warmth, "you have been a faithful helper to me; and when you go back to Boston, the city we all love so well, it will add, I doubt not, to your happiness—to the happiness of both of you—to feel that ours is restored."

The large blue eyes of the worthy gentleman grew misty as they wandered affectionately from husband to wife, and he murmured softly:

"Whom He loveth, He chasteneth."

THE END



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